15c

RODEO ROMANCES

DEC.

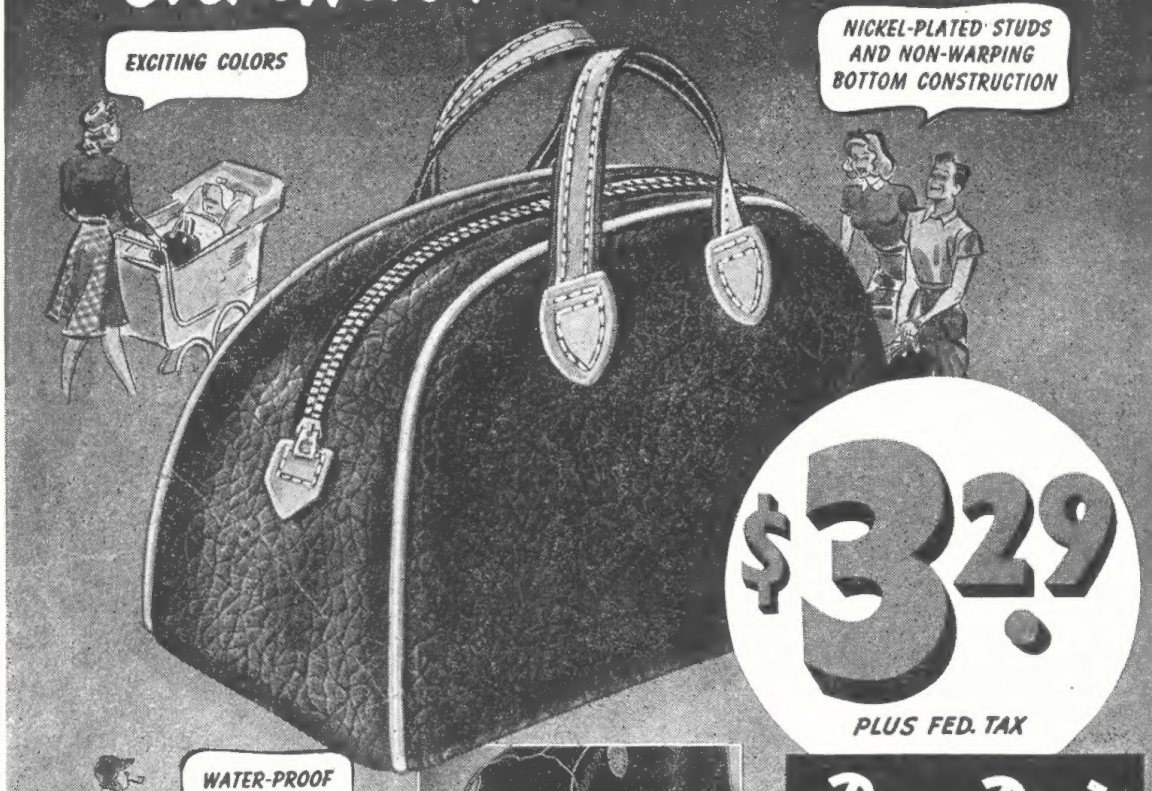
A THRILLING PUBLICATION

IF THE *Heart's* VALIANT
A Glamorous Complete Novelet
By CLINTON DANGERFIELD

I'M BACK IN THE SADDLE AGAIN
His Own True Story
By GENE AUTRY

ARENA REAPERS
A Romantic Novelet
By CLIFF WALTERS

Par-Pak.. THE MOST SENSATIONAL VALUE ever offered in a UTILITY BAG!



$3.29

PLUS FED. TAX

Par-Pak

atlantic

WATER-PROOF PLASTIC COATED FABRICS AND PLASTIC WELTS

REPLACEMENT OR REFUND OF MONEY
Guaranteed by Good Housekeeping
IF DEFECTIVE OR NOT AS ADVERTISED THEREIN

PATENTED NO-SAG AERO-FRAME*

PADDED HANDLES WITH GENUINE LEATHER SUPPORTS AND PULL TABS

You can no more help "going" for these many big Par-Pak features than the whole family can help going for its "1000 use" versatility. Built *roomy* with *plus* smartness...plus durability...plus value...by the makers of the unique and famous Val-A-Pak. Stays in shape *permanently* because of the patented NO-SAG AERO-FRAME*...Ideal for overnight trips and "gadabout" activities the year round, Par-Pak is available in brown, blue and sand duck—and black or brown simulated leather.

ATLANTIC PRODUCTS CORPORATION, TRENTON 5, NEW JERSEY

*U. S. Pat. No. 1999424; Atlantic Products Corporation, Exclusive Licensee.

Are YOU doing bookkeeping "chores"?

CLIMB HIGHER!

BECOME an ACCOUNTANT

IF you are doing the "chore" work of accounting as a bookkeeper, ledger clerk, cost clerk, billing clerk, or in one of the other many record keeping jobs—

You should consider climbing higher—becoming an accountant.

Why be satisfied all your life with a small salary and an ordinary job when there is such a large future for the man or woman who understands accountancy in all its forms and phases?

One big difference between you and the successful accountant is that he doesn't do the chores. He bosses those who do the drudgery and he gets the money and prestige. And he does that because he knows the principles behind the records you keep—can plan those records and interpret them to management. He knows what you know—and a lot more.

There are two ways in which you can get this knowledge which will qualify you for an accountant's position.

First—the old way of day-by-day experience on the job. This is the long route—taking many, many years, sometimes a lifetime. Most people taking this way never get anywhere. Why sacrifice years of success—lose time and money—when there is a better and easier way?

Second, the LaSalle way of learning in your spare time—studying and preparing for the step ahead. You learn by doing—you study accounting principles and solve accounting problems. You cover accountancy from the basic principles right up through Accounting Systems and Income Tax Procedure—C.P.A. training if you so desire.

As you go along you absorb the principles of auditing, business law, statistical control, cost accounting, organization, management and finance, etc.

This way is not magic. It is not easy. It requires giving up certain spare time to serious study. How long will it take you to acquire this accountancy training is strictly up to you—you can go as fast or as slowly as you choose. But after you have gone part way (you need not wait until you are clear through the training) you will find yourself stepping up to better positions.

And once you have mastered this fascinating profession—once you have become an accountant—then you will have the money and the standing to make your dreams come true. You will be a respected member of the best paying profession and equipped to go out into public accounting or to climb to a top management position.

Our free 48-page booklet, "Accountancy, the Profession That Pays," tells you what you must know to be an accountant and how you can prepare in your leisure time at moderate cost. The coupon below will bring this booklet quickly without cost or obligation. You already have a start in this field; now find out how you can go all the way. Do it today.

G. I. APPROVED

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY

A Correspondence Institution

Dept. 12329-H 417 S. Dearborn Street, Chicago 5, Illinois

I'd like to know more about your home study program to help me prepare for an accounting career. Please send me your free 48-page booklet, "Accountancy, the Profession That Pays."

Name.....*Age*.....

Present position.....

Address.....

City & State.....

Vol. 7, No. 3 FOGHORN CLANCY, Editor December, 1946

A Complete Novel of the Arena

IF THE HEART'S VALIANT.....Clinton Dangerfield 11
Though her secret love for rodeo star Neith Nelson seems hopeless, Lyria Darnel battles courageously to save the ideal of her dreams from the brutal vengeance of desperate and cowardly foes!

A Complete Novelet

ARENA REAPERS.....Cliff Walters 54
When Jean Warren and red-headed Forge Stafford pitch in to make a rodeo a success, a ghost suddenly springs to new life—and true love rides once more over the rolling rangeland!

Short Stories

QUEEN OF THE CIRCLE DIAMOND.....Harold F. Cruickshank 41
A mysterious stranger brings new romance to Jo Daly
CONTEST OF HEARTS.....Sally De Vries 79
The rodeo arena provides the key to Letty Carter's problem
SHARE THE WEALTH.....Leon V. Almirall 86
Pete McGuinness makes a desperate try for rodeo victory
SINGING ROPE.....Monica Morton 91
Doreen Welch takes a tip from the Romans—with surprising results

Special Features

IN THE ARENA.....A Department 6
Where readers and the editor meet
THREE-TIME CHAMP.....Ken Roberts 50
The national bull-riding champion tells his own story
I'M BACK IN THE SADDLE AGAIN.....Gene Autry 72
The famous star's own true story of his colorful career
THRILLS IN RODEO.....Foghorn Clancy 81
Exciting stories of famous rodeo personalities

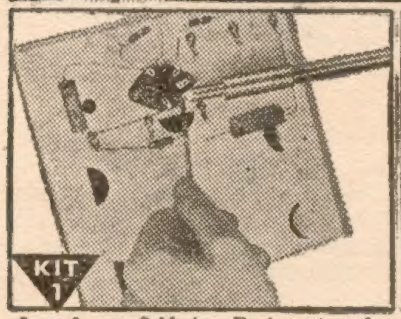
RODEO ROMANCES published every other month and copyright 1946 by Best Publications, Inc., 10 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y. N. L. Pines, President. Single copies, 15 cents. 12 issues, $1.80. Entered as second class matter March 20, 1945 at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Manuscripts must be accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelopes, and are submitted at the author's risk. Names of all characters in stories and semi-fiction articles are fictitious. If the name of any living person or existing institution is used, it is a coincidence.

Read our companion magazines: Thrilling Western, Thrilling Ranch Stories, Thrilling Wonder Stories, Thrilling Sports, Thrilling Love, Thrilling Mystery Novel, Thrilling Detective, Thrilling Football, Popular Western, Popular Detective, Popular Sports Magazine, Popular Love, Popular Football, Texas Rangers, G-Men Detective, West, Detective Novel Magazine, Sky Fighters, The Phantom Detective, Everyday Astrology, Masked Rider Western, Range Riders Western, Startling Stories, Black Book Detective, The Rio Kid Western, Popular Crossword Puzzles, Exciting Western, Exciting Sports, and Exciting Love.

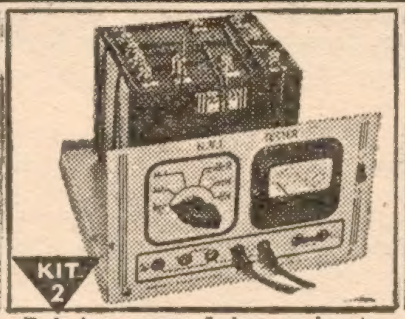
PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

I Will Show You How to Learn RADIO by Practicing in Spare Time

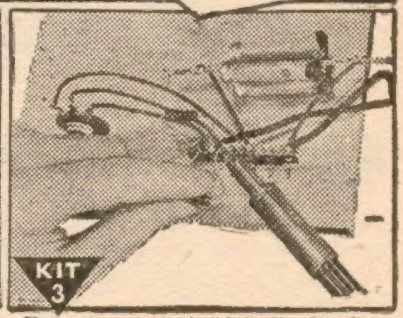
I Send You 6 Big Kits of Radio Parts



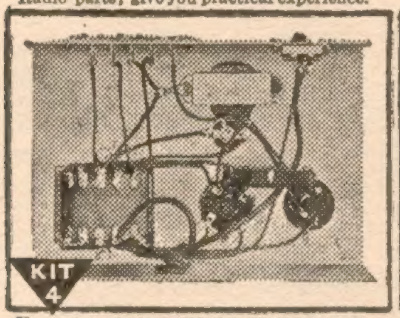
I send you Soldering Equipment and Radio Parts; show you how to do Radio soldering; how to mount and connect Radio parts; give you practical experience.



Early in my course I show you how to build this N.R.I. Tester with parts I send. It soon helps you fix neighborhood Radios and earn EXTRA money in spare time.

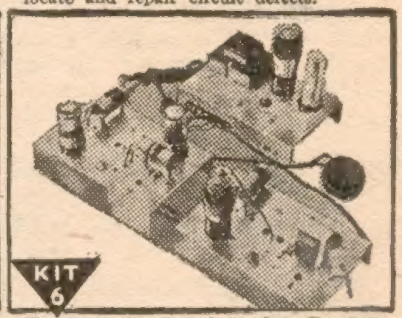


You get parts to build Radio Circuits; then test them; see how they work; learn how to design special circuits; how to locate and repair circuit defects.



You get parts to build this Vacuum Tube Power Pack; make changes which give you experience with packs of many kinds; learn to correct power pack troubles.

Building this A. M. Signal Generator gives you more valuable experience. It provides amplitude-modulated signals for many tests and experiments.



You build this Superheterodyne Receiver which brings in local and distant stations—and gives you more experience to help you win success in Radio.

KNOW RADIO—*Win Success*

I Will Train You at Home—SAMPLE LESSON FREE

Do you want a good-pay job in the fast-growing Radio Industry—or your own Radio Shop? Mail the Coupon for a Sample Lesson and my 64-page book, "Win Rich Rewards in Radio," both FREE. See how I will train you at home—how you get practical Radio experience building, testing Radio circuits with 6 BIG KITS OF PARTS I send!

Many Beginners Soon Make Extra Money in Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll I start sending EXTRA MONEY JOB SHEETS that show how to make EXTRA money fixing neighbors' Radios in spare time while still learning! It's probably easier to get started now than ever before, because the Radio Repair Business is booming. Trained Radio Technicians also find profitable opportunities in Police, Aviation, Marine Radio, Broadcasting, Radio Manufacturing, Public Address work. Think of even *greater* opportunities as Television, FM, and Electronic devices become available to the public! Send for FREE books now!

Find Out What NRI Can Do For You

Mail Coupon for Sample Lesson and my FREE 64-page book. Read the details about my Course; letters from men I trained; see how quickly, easily you can get started. No obligation! Just MAIL COUPON NOW in envelope or paste on penny postal. **J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 6NO9, National Radio Institute, *Pioneer Home Study Radio School*, Washington 9, D. C.**

My Course Includes Training in
TELEVISION • ELECTRONICS

Approved for Training under GI Bill

Good for Both—FREE

MR. J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 6NO9
National Radio Institute, Washington 9, D. C.

Mail me FREE, your sample lesson and 64-page book. (No salesman will call. Please write plainly.)

Name.....Age.....

Address.....

City.....Zone....State.....

Where Readers and the Editor Meet

By FOGHORN CLANCY

GREETINGS, rodeo fans, here we are once more taking up our position in the arena. We are here to give you the lowdown on things that have happened and are happening in the land of the cowboy, and in that rough and tumble sport called rodeo!

It's a great rodeo season, this 1946 session of rangeland sports. Looks like it is going to be even greater than we predicted at the start of this season. Thousands and thousands of dollars are being handed out in purses at the rodeos, millons being taken in at the box offices. Seems as though all America is determined to make up for the amusement missed during the war.

An Important Merger

The Rodeo Association of America, organized in 1929 and composed of more than a hundred rodeos in the United States and Canada, has held its first annual convention since the start of World War Number Two, at Pendleton, Oregon. At this conventon the board of directors were empowered to revamp the organization and make some changes. Among projected changes, it was understood, was to combine with the National Rodeo Association, making one organization out of the two. The National Rodeo Association was the outgrowth of the Southwest Rodeo Association, organized in 1935.

The purpose of the merger is to combine the efforts of rodeo managers and committees for the good of the game as a whole, to arrange dates that do not conflict and to have a central body with officers throughout the rodeo territory to protect the interests of the rodeo managers and committees.

There never was really any need for two organizations, and as both awarded yearly championship titles on their indvidual point systems, it was a bit confusing to the general public at the end of a season since a contestant might be either an N.R.A champion or an R.A.A. champion.

Officers Appointed

At Denver, Colorado, a meeting was held by the officials of both organizations and an amalgamation of both oganizations was completed and the organization was named the International Rodeo Association. The officers as named were R. J. Hofmann, of Cheyenne, Wyoming, president; Fred S. McCargar, of Salinas, California, secretary; Roy F. Evans, of Dodge City, Kansas; Carl A. Studer, of Canadian, Texas; Frank Moore, of New York City, and Jack Dillon of Calgary, Canada, composed the executive committee. E. N. Boylen, who was also named as a member of the committee, was made Rodeo Commissioner.

The position of Boylen was supposed to be similar to that of czar of the sport, or that of baseball commissioner, and the commissioner was supposed to handle the business of the organzation as regards cowboy associations, and perhaps particularly as regards the Rodeo Cowboys Association which is a union of rodeo cowboys.

The Rodeo Cowboys Association up to February 1945 was known as the Cowboy Turtle Association, but revamped and streamlined their organization and engaged Earl Lindsey as business manager.

A meeting between Boylen and Lindsey

(Continued on page 8)

LOTS of people want things they can't reach. But there's little in the way of business success that's out of reach of the *trained* man.

And training is *always* within your reach. It's as close as the nearest letter box. Mark and mail the coupon on this page and you're in touch with the International Correspondence Schools.

I. C. S. has had 55 years of experience in training men and women for success. Bring average intelligence and better than average determination to your studies with these famous Schools and you can master any subject of your choice . . . qualify as an expert in line for responsibilities and rewards.

You study in your spare time—and the cost is surprisingly low. Thousands of successful students have demonstrated that today's I. C. S. student is tomorrow's leader. Send for full information. Do it *now!*

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

ICS

BOX 3970-G, SCRANTON 9, PENNA.

Without cost or obligation, please send me full particulars about the course *before* which I have marked X:

Business and Academic Courses
- ☐ Accounting ☐ Advertising
- ☐ Arithmetic ☐ Bookkeeping
- ☐ Business Correspondence
- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Certified Public Accounting
- ☐ Commercial
- ☐ Cost Accounting
- ☐ Federal Tax
- ☐ First Year College
- ☐ Foremanship ☐ French
- ☐ Good English ☐ High School
- ☐ Higher Mathematics
- ☐ Illustrating ☐ Motor Traffic
- ☐ Postal Service
- ☐ Salesmanship ☐ Secretarial
- ☐ Sign Lettering
- ☐ Spanish ☐ Stenography
- ☐ Traffic Management

Air Conditioning and Plumbing Courses
- ☐ Air Conditioning
- ☐ Heating ☐ Plumbing
- ☐ Refrigeration ☐ Steam Fitting

Chemistry Courses
- ☐ Chemical Engineering
- ☐ Chemistry, Analytical
- ☐ Chemistry, Industrial
- ☐ Chemistry, Mfg. Iron & Steel
- ☐ Petroleum Refining ☐ Plastics
- ☐ Pulp and Paper Making

Civil Engineering, Architectural and Mining Courses
- ☐ Architectural Drafting
- ☐ Architecture
- ☐ Building Estimating
- ☐ Civil Engineering ☐ Coal Mining
- ☐ Contracting and Building
- ☐ Highway Engineering
- ☐ Lumber Dealer
- ☐ Reading Structural Blueprints
- ☐ Sanitary Engineering
- ☐ Structural Drafting
- ☐ Structural Engineering
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping

Communications Courses
- ☐ Electronics
- ☐ Practical Telephony
- ☐ Radio, General
- ☐ Radio Operating
- ☐ Radio Servicing
- ☐ Telegraph Engineering

Electrical Courses
- ☐ Electrical Drafting
- ☐ Electrical Engineering
- ☐ Electric Light and Power
- ☐ Lighting Technician
- ☐ Practical Electrician
- ☐ Power House Electric
- ☐ Ship Electrician

Internal Combustion Engines Courses
- ☐ Auto Technician ☐ Aviation
- ☐ Diesel-Electric
- ☐ Diesel Engines ☐ Gas Engines

Mechanical Courses
- ☐ Aeronautical Engineering
- ☐ Aircraft Drafting
- ☐ Flight Engineer
- ☐ Forging
- ☐ Foundry Work
- ☐ Heat Treatment of Metals
- ☐ Industrial Engineering
- ☐ Industrial Metallurgy
- ☐ Machine Shop
- ☐ Machine Shop Inspection
- ☐ Mechanical Drafting
- ☐ Mechanical Engineering
- ☐ Mold-Loft Work
- ☐ Patternmaking—Wood, Metal
- ☐ Reading Shop Blueprints
- ☐ Sheet-Metal Drafting
- ☐ Sheet-Metal Worker
- ☐ Ship Drafting ☐ Ship Fitting
- ☐ Tool Designing ☐ Toolmaking
- ☐ Welding—Gas and Electric

Railroad Courses
- ☐ Air Brake ☐ Car Inspector
- ☐ Diesel Locomotive
- ☐ Locomotive Engineer
- ☐ Locomotive Fireman
- ☐ Railroad Section Foreman

Steam Engineering Courses
- ☐ Boilermaking
- ☐ Combustion Engineering
- ☐ Engine Running
- ☐ Marine Engineering
- ☐ Steam Electric ☐ Steam Engines

Textile Courses
- ☐ Cotton Manufacturing
- ☐ Rayon Weav'g ☐ Textile Desig'ng
- ☐ Woolen Manufacturing

Home

*Name*_____ *Age*____ *Address*_____

*City*_____ *State*_____ *Present Position*_____

*Working Hours*_____ *A.M. to*_____ *P.M.* **Length of Service in World War II**_____

Special tuition rates to members of the Armed Forces. Enrollment under the G.I. Bill of Rights approved for War II Veterans.

Canadian residents send coupon to International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Ltd., Montreal, Canada.

HANDKERCHIEF TEST

PROVES VITAL ZONE SPOTLESS AND FREE FROM "GOO"—*no matter how often you smoke it!*

Wm. DEMUTH & CO. Inc., N.Y. 22

WDC

HESSON GUARD

MILANO

GET EYE-GLASSES *by* MAIL

Send No Money!

16-DAY TRIAL Offer

NEWEST STYLES

NEW LOW PRICES

Send for FREE Scientific Sight Test Chart and Catalog. Write today.

U.S. EYE-GLASSES CO. 1557 MILWAUKEE AVENUE Dept. C-82, CHICAGO 22, ILL.

LAW . . .

STUDY AT HOME Legally trained men win higher positions and bigger success in business and public life. Greater opportunities now than ever before.

More Ability: More Prestige: More Money We guide you step by step. You can train at home during spare time. Degree of LL.B. We furnish all text material, including 14-volume Law Library. Low cost, easy terms. Get our valuable 48-page "Law Training for Leadership" and "Evidence" books FREE. Send NOW. G. I. APPROVED.

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY, 417 South Dearborn Street
A Correspondence Institution Dept. 12329-L Chicago 5, Ill.

IN THE ARENA

(Continued from page 6)

was held at Denver, May 10th, and while this meeting was reported as friendly, the two according to reports do not see things in the same light, and if they get into a quarrel it will naturally spread, which will not be to the best interests of the sport.

Junior C. of C. Rodeo

The results of the recent Junior Chamber of Commerce Rodeo in Phoenix, Arizona, in bareback bronc riding, were: First, Bill Linderman; second, Larry Finley; third, Tater Decker; fourth, split between Jimmy Sloan and Bud Linderman. Tom Knight won the saddle bronc riding, Shirley Hussey was second, Jerry Ambler was third and Claude Morris fourth. Gerald Roberts copped the bull rding, Dick Griffith was second, Roy Calloway was third and Jimmy Schumacher was fourth. Joe Mendes was best man in the steer wrestling, Dan Poore was second, Bill Rush was third and Steve Heacock was fourth.

Jim Hudson outroped the field to win first prize in the calf roping, Vern Castro was second, Joe Bassett was third and Clarence Darnell was fourth. In the team roping Vern Castro and Gordon Davis were the winning team, Bud Parker and Maynard Gaylor were second, Pete Grubb and Ed Schell third and Carl Arnold and G. W. Cox fourth.

Rodeo News and Notes

The Pendleton Roundup at Pendleton, Oregon, has launched a new seating construction program which calls for an expenditure of $50,000 for the enlargement of their grandstand and bleacher facilities. Work involves four new 40-foot concrete and steel sections, three of them for the grandstand and one to connect with the West bleachers. Plans also call for construction of a grandstand roof.

Dates have already been set for the Fifteenth Annual Fat Stock Show and Rodeo at Houston, Texas, according to J. W. Sartwelle, president. The 1947 dates will be January 31st through February 9th, and more than $300,000 will be spent in providing additional facilities, including additional exhibit space in the livestock annex building.

The opening engagement of Col. Jim Eskew's JE Ranch Rodeo in the indoor arenas with Gene Autry as guest star was at Uline Ice Arena in Washington, D. C., and the engagement broke all previous records for attendance. Col. Jim Eskew was the pro-

(Continued on page 100)

THOUSANDS NOW PLAY

who never thought they could!

Learned Quickly at Home

I didn't dream I could actually learn to play without a teacher. Now when I play for people they hardly believe that I learned to play so well in so short a time.
*H. C. S., Calif.

Plays at Dances

I have completed your course and your lessons have been most satisfactory. I can play all of the popular songs. I have also earned money playing at dances.
*E. N. J., New York.

Wouldn't Take $1000 for Course

The lessons are so simple that anyone can understand them. I have learned to play by note in a little more than a month. I wouldn't take a thousand dollars for my course. *S. E. A., Kansas City, Mo.

Finding New Joy

I am finding a new joy that I never experienced before, for I have always wanted to play, but had given up hope until I heard of your course.
*C. S. Lucien, Okla.

Anyone Can Learn

I first thought I wouldn't ever learn to play by note, but I soon discovered that the lessons are so simple anyone can understand them. I am thankful that I study with your school.
*R. F. MAXEYS, Ga.

*Actual pupils' names on request. Pictures by professional models.

You, too, can play any instrument By this EASY A-B-C Method

YOU think it's difficult to learn music? That's what thousands of others have thought! Just like you, they long to play some instrument — the piano, violin, guitar, saxophone or other favorites. But they denied themselves the pleasure —because they thought it took months and years of tedious study to learn.

Learn in Spare Time at Home

And then they made an amazing discovery! They learned about a wonderful way to learn music at home—without a private teacher—without tedious study—and in a surprisingly short time. They wrote to the U. S. School of Music for the facts about this remarkable short-cut method. And the facts opened their eyes! They were amazed to find how easy it was to learn.

The result? Over 850-000 men and women have studied music at home this simple, A-B-C way. Now, all over the world, enthusiastic music-lovers are enjoying the thrilling satisfaction of creating their own music. They have found the key to good time, popularity and profit.

Costs Less Than 7c a Day

And that's what **you** can do, right now. Get the proof that you, too, can learn to play your favorite instrument — quickly, easily, in spare time at home for less than seven cents a day. Never mind if you have no musical knowledge, training or talent. Just read the fascinating booklet and Print and Picture sample that fully explain all about the famous U. S. School method. If interested tear out the coupon now, before you turn the page. U. S. School of Music, 29412 Brunswick Bldg. New York 10, N. Y. Largest school of its kind in the world. (48th year)

FREE!
Print and Picture Sample

NOTICE
Please don't confuse our method with any systems claiming to teach "without music" or "by ear". We teach you easily and quickly to play real music, any music, by standard notes . . . not by any trick or number system.

U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC,
29412 Brunswick Bldg., New York 10, N. Y.

I am interested in music study, particularly in the instrument checked below. Please send me your free illustrated booklet "How to Learn Music at Home," and your free Print and Picture Sample.

Piano	Saxophone	Clarinet	Practical Finger Control
Guitar	Trumpet, Cornet	Trombone	Piccolo
Hawaiian Guitar	Reed Organ	Flute	Mandolin
Violin	Tenor Banjo	Modern Elementary Harmony	
Piano Accordion	Ukulele		

Have you Instrument?.....

Name.....
(Please print)

Address.....

City.....State.....

NOTE: If you are under 16 years of age, parent must sign coupon.

SAVE 2c — STICK COUPON ON PENNY POSTCARD

PLAINSMAN and the LADY

With ANDY CLYDE • DONALD BARRY • RAYMOND WALBURN Screen Play by RICHARD WORMSER
Original Story by MICHAEL URIS & RALPH SPENCE • Music by GEORGE ANTHEIL • Associate Producer and Director JOSEPH KANE

There Lyria stood alone with her secret, hugging it to her heart—the image of the man of her dreams!

If the Heart's Valiant

By CLINTON DANGERFIELD

Though her secret love for rodeo star Neith Nelson seems hopeless, Lyria Darnel battles courageously to save the ideal of her dreams from the vengeance of cowardly foes!

CHAPTER I

Man of Her Dreams

HAPPINESS is a fine thing and the the southwest town of Cabarras was glad to be happy. Once a year that happened. Once a year, for a whole week, the town forgot all its troubles and became a place of laughter, and music from spirited bands, and flying flags and very gallant riders on very splendid horses.

During this week strangers flowed into Cabarras from everywhere, looking for excitement and thrills, knowing they would get what they sought, because the rodeo, at this

particular date, took over the town, released folks from conventionality and taught them gay friendliness. Also the rodeo showed them magnificent examples of America's young manhood, its smiling contempt of danger.

There was one exception to the general delight. The prettiest Southwest girl was full of stifled discontent. Usually Lyria Darnel didn't allow her lovely features to show what she felt.

This was parade time. The rodeo, so long dreamed of, was actually here. Soon the van of the parade would appear. Already Lyria Darnel could hear the band, and the faces of the waiting crowd, eagerly expectant, were turned that way.

Faces! So many of them, she thought with impatient discontent—old, young, known, unknown, hundreds and hundreds of 'em, all with two eyes, a nose and mouth, all more or less alike—just people! Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, they were all subject to the same indictment of being merely people.

All through her young womanhood she had been disturbed by the lack of something never yet found, the face of a man that she'd only have to see once in order to know instantly, a man with a brilliant, arresting personality afire within him. He wouldn't be just a person; he'd be the man she wanted to meet—the man she could love!

A half dozen offers of marriage from anxious, impetuous suitors had left Lyria cold. Even while they stammered love, that insistent, seeking instinct had made her ready with her, "No." Was she just a fool? Or was there something portentous in her impulse to wait and search for a person she had never seen or would maybe never see.

THE golden tide of music rolled closer. Above her the breeze flung itself against the silken flags of welcome to the rodeo and set them streaming gayly. The band, which was furnished by pretty cowgirls strutting their stuff in silks as gay as the flags, appeared first. Cheers and teasing greeted them. Men tossed them flowers which—alas—fell in the dust but were paid for by laughing glances.

The column of the famous rodeo riders, four abreast, followed the band. All of these riders were men in the first flush of youth, full of its fire and its pulsing health. They were all instructed to glance now and then to right and left, to avoid the fixed forward stare which, to the rodeo manager, seemed less friendly.

So Lyria's swift gaze flashed along the first, the second rank of horseman. She found no fault in them. They rode their shining, glossy horses with easy skill, they made a gallant picture, but it was to her lonely searching heart merely a picture, and they were—just people.

The third rank, then the fourth passed. The excited, happy crowd tossed the riders' famous names about. The band crashed out a stirring march.

The fifth rank came even with Lyria, glanced her way, and into her consciousness leaped a face she knew she could never forget, a face familiar to her, for she had long been seeking it. It sent a poignant thrill along every nerve. It was lighted by a slight smile and yet was touched with reticence. Their eyes met. She was conscious of his swift keen glance which seemed to probe, for an instant, into the depths of her soul.

He rode on. She stood mute and trembling. She heard a spectator call his name and heard him answer to it.

With passionate eagerness her gaze followed him until a bend in the main street hid him from view. But instead of moving after him with the crowd, she slipped through the laughing, joking men and women and into an embrasure between the jutting windows of a store.

There she stood alone with her secret, hugging it with quickened pulses, to her heart. In that imagined dimension she now was in, his face remained clearly before her, bronzed, young, boldly featured and distinguished, the eyes brilliant, steady and piercing. Again she watched him as he rode on, marking the easy poise of him in the saddle. Again she heard the spectator call:

"Hey there, Neith Nelson!" And heard Neith's baritone answer: "Hey! Hiya, amigo!"

Neith Nelson! He was the most famous of the rodeo stars, and the bravest, she'd heard, among brave men. Not only was he brave, reports had said, but gentle with the weak also, which is an unfailing characteristic of the truly courageous. She had listened to this praise of the unknown Neith only yesterday, with all the optimism of her gorgeous youth, and had thrilled at the mention of his name. Even then, she had been strangely interested.

But now she had seen what she'd hoped to see—an unforgettable face. Now she'd

To Lyria, Robina seemed full of contemptuous security—sure that Neith Nelson cared for her and sure of her ability to hold his love

heard what she'd hoped to hear, a voice that enthralled and fascinated her with the music of its deep tones.

While the crowd flowed past the window like a murmuring river, she recalled to her mind every scrap she had heard about him. He was unmarried, honest, ambitious, clean living. The personalities of the rodeo stars were always being discussed and were well known to the public.

As she stood there in the embrasure, there took place a miracle such as is seen in India, where a magician will show you a small, a very small plant. He will then cover it with a cloth, wave his hands, draw off the cloth and the plant has grown up and is in flower!

A similar miracle had blossomed in Lyria's heart. She had found what she sought all her life, and because of it, there sprang into swift, marvelous growth a flower of exquisite happiness and a rash, gay confidence in the future.

SHE was enchanted with her new found joy. It filled her mind and caused her pulses to dance with a new delicious tempo. Life had brought Neith to her, and Life would draw them close together.

But even while she dreamed there in new found ecstasy, Fate was conspiring to dash her bright hopes to the ground.

To her ears came two rough masculine voices, part of the sidewalk crowd watching the last of the parade. What they said tore brutally through her golden web of romantic dreams.

"This is circuit's end for the rodeo. So I reckon Neith Nelson'll stay on here, Bill."

"Here? What for?"

"Ain't you heard he's engaged to Robina Vane?"

"Little old for him, ain't she?"

"Five-six years older, mebbe, but Robina's a blamed good bet. So's Neith for that matter. I've knowed him since he was a kid and—"

She lost the end of the sentence as the two men moved on with the crowd, distance swallowing up the words. But she had heard enough.

Quite enough to leave her frozen with shock.

She struggled to forget what she'd just heard, tried to pretend her dream had not been ripped apart like a torn playing card. But it had been. And Lyria felt as if she stood revealed as an imaginative fool! What else—what else? she asked herself. Just that, and nothing else!

It was something to laugh at—to laugh at, you understand, she told herself wildly. That is the way to regain your common sense again. Laugh at what you thought was Fate. Grin over your crazy idea that two people could be made especially for each other.

Marty, a deaf and dumb farm lad, paused and handed her a little purse she had just dropped. She gave him a dollar from it, mechanically and never knew she had done so.

She felt a sudden longing to get away from the crowd, away from the town. Since she already was dressed in riding togs, she could make straight for her fleet roan and soon leave Cabarras far behind. In swift action she could best forget what a fool she had been.

Leaving the embrasure, she began to move through the crowds, deaf to the coaxing flatteries of strangers who, with the easy freedom permitted during rodeo days tried to engage her in conversation. She was also blind to the greetings of friends. Quickly she slipped through the press until she came to an alley.

She fled down this and into back streets, making for her roan horse, Logan.

"I must have an excuse, a practical excuse, to leave town," she told herself. "I'll say I wanted to snapshot those cattalo down in Littlewolf valley. I must get my camera—no, I've got it already."

She had quite forgotten her snapshot plans, made before she saw the parade. She still didn't remember now, in her confusing bitterness, that she had promised to meet her father, Bill Darnel, for lunch. Bill was a big, pepper-tempered, redheaded widower.

CHAPTER II

Horse Thief

THE parade was soon over. Neith Nelson, remembering he had stuck his prized field glasses in a crevice of the livery barn where he stabled his three horses, hurried his mount back there at a sharp gallop. This was a private barn belonging to a farmer whose land flanked the town and whose feed made the barn a sort of horse heaven.

Neith arrived there, hoping that Hyena, a stall-cleaner temporarily in charge of the

barn, hadn't found the leather case. His hopes were vain. Hyena already had the glasses glued to his eyes, and he was looking down into the lush little valley below the high flat, and chuckling harshly to himself.

The two men were a violent contrast. Neith was handsome, distinguished and youthful. Hyena had reached a hideous middle age. He had coarse hair, hunched shoulders and strange, greenish eyes which closely resembled those of the animal for whom a zoo-visiting cowboy had named him. He had the sneaking ways of the hyena, and his laughter was oddly like the rickety hateful mirth of one of the most detestable creatures ever created.

Neith scowled at Hyena, stripped off his saddle and was just starting for the harness room with it when Hyena, with a wild outburst of raucous enjoyment, thrust the field glasses toward their owner.

"Look, feller, look," he yelped. "Funniest sittyation y'ever saw."

The rodeo star was thinking about Robina when the field glasses were pushed at him. He took the glasses and lifted them, his saddle on his left arm. He was impatient, half minded not to look.

"Anything *you* think funny, you butcher, is sure to be rotten," Nelson said.

"Down where the catalo are!" chortled Hyena.

Neith looked. His fingers tensed on the glasses. His eyes widened. A startling scene had leaped into the lens.

In the none too high branches of a decaying old cherry tree clung a white faced, terrified girl, clung there in desperate terror. Below her raged Caliban, a shaggy monster bull of a catalo breed. He was viciously horning the tree's bole, determined to get his human prey. How long the frail little tree could endure the battering was only a matter of seconds, perhaps.

The girl's mouth was open. Perhaps she was screaming but so thin was her voice with horror, if she were screaming, that no sound came up on the flat.

Hurling the glasses from him, the rodeo star streaked for his horse. He flung his saddle on his horse's back and hastily yanked the cinches tight. Then he disappeared over the edge of the flat at breakneck speed, riding a rough steep trail that led down into the little broken valley.

Hyena looked malignantly after him.

"Blast him anyway," he snarled. "Calling me a name like that jest 'cause he ain't got no sense of humor! Glad him an' his danged rodeo cain't be in Cabarras more'n a week at most!"

The Southwest town of Cabarras lay on the edge of a wide flat. A quarter mile below lay the small broken valley of Littlewolf. Down toward this valley Neith rode recklessly, following a steep, rough trail. He had been at the catalo pen yesterday, drawn there by curiosity regarding this cattle and buffalo cross.

He had seen the vicious eyed shaggy monster of a bull, Caliban and had, when riding away, gone closely past the frail old cherry tree. That tree was a fragile sanctuary indeed against the enormous force and grim enmity of Caliban.

Yes, he remembered the shaggy brute and the cherry tree. He also remembered the girl. She'd been in Cabarras and she had watched the brilliant rodeo morning parade roll by.

Riding in that parade, Neith had passed so close to her that they could have touched hands. He had looked down into her lifted face and two words had sparked in his mind —radiant and lovely.

AT the time she'd been abrim with life. How would she be when he reached the ancient cherry tree? Just a torn and blood-stained body, with all life gone?

He reached Littlewolf, and turned with still greater speed down an open trail.

The little valley was chaotic with broken ridges flung here and there and small hills of strange cleavage. Stunted timber huddled near them.

Horse and rider sped along the valley trail toward a couple of sharp heights, almost unscalable by a horse. Topping a rise, Neith swept down toward the cut leading through, and saw that it was blocked by an ox wagon which was jammed squarely across the way. The half broken ox team had rammed itself into a clump of scrub oak with a wild idea of escaping from the yelling driver's lash.

The excitement was enhanced by the bellowed—and ignored—instructions of big, red-headed Bill Darnel on his big red horse. Bill, who had been heading for Cabarras, was barred from town as effectively from it as Neith was barred from the spot he was trying to reach by the oxcart.

Bill's temper was boiling, but the rodeo star was coolly measuring, with a keen

glance, the height and width of the wagon.

"Keep out the way," he shouted to Bill Darnel. "I'm coming over!"

"No, you blasted fool," thundered Darnel. "Don't try it. You'll bust your crazy neck!"

But Neith's resolute mind had rejected all thought of failure. As he raced for the barrier, the take-off.

"By heaven, she shall not die!" he swore aloud to himself.

His glossy black gelding rose like a stag for the leap. But neither man nor horse could see the thin wire used on the load of household truck. The black's left forefoot caught in it and he came a fearful cropper.

Neith and his hastily cinched saddle fell clear of the horse, but the rodeo star did not rise. Neither did his horse. It seemed as though both of them were dead.

The gaping driver had stopped swearing at his recalcitrant ox team. He peered over his wagon, rising on the wheel spokes to do so.

"He'd a cleared it, if that there wire hadn't thowed 'em," he said.

"I warned him!" bellowed Bill Darnel. "Shucks, he's gittin' up!" He looked sardonically at the rodeo star. Evidently Darnel knew nothing of the girl's peril. "Feller you done killed a fine horse for nothing!"

He turned his back on Neith and walked over toward the black gelding which hadn't moved. Partly Bill Darnel wanted to examine the horse and partly he was attracted by the fine pearl handled gun which had fallen out of Neith's holster.

As Darnel moved toward the gun, Neith's brain, momentarily dazed by his hard fall, cleared swiftly, and a thought alerted and spurred him. Seconds, it was a matter of seconds!

His own horse he believed to be dead, but there, miraculously before him, was a big red animal, outfitted and waiting. The saddle was already cinched, a rope was at the horn, so now he could use either his gun or rope on the bull. Neith was quite unaware of having lost his gun.

Just as Bill Darnel swooped on Neith's gun and straightened with it, he heard the wild beat of hoofs, the forward leap of a horse hurled into a mad run.

Gun in hand Bill wheeled. He saw the stranger and his prized red gelding disappearing together. Fast as the horse raced away, the rise of Bill Darnel's rage was far faster. It was instantaneous. A few words came back to him over the stranger's shoulder.

In Bill's black fury they were a taunt from a horse thief, for he got the tones not the words and construed the sounds according to his own volcanic wrath.

The gun leaped up, steadied.

As it did so the ox driver emitted a yell.

"No, don't," the man shouted. "That's—"

His sentence was clipped off by a roar from the pearl handled forty-five. . . .

At the cherry tree, meantime, death was closer than ever.

Crouched in her frail, leafy sanctuary, Lyria Darnel again felt the little fruit tree quiver and tremble under her as once more the shaggy monster, just below her, butted savagely against it.

SHE fought for courage. She was threatened not only by the catalo bull but by her own terror of him. If she grew dizzy from fear and lurched out of the small, fragile tree she would be horned and trampled to death.

His breath came steaming up from his big, red-lined nostrils. He had the high, enormously heavy shoulders of his buffalo sire and the catlike activity of his longhorn Texas dam. It was the cattalo's horns which drove terror deepest into her. They were curved daggers, intended by Nature for a swift sideways rip and thrust.

He snorted, muttered in a low rumble, turned now and withdrew a few yards. If that meant he would actually charge the tree, his head hitting it like a battering ram, it would surely go down and that dreadful armed head would come snuffling and seeking among the slender branches and pale, green sickly leaves.

Her frantic mind turned to the roedo. Of the riders she knew one—had known him since childhood—Whittier Warringer. But why should she hope he'd come to her rescue? The parade was over but Whit would be making passes at some pretty girl—that was Whit's way. Any girl so long as she was pretty.

Then, in the midst of her despair, apparently without rhyme or reason for his coming, she saw Whit Warringer appear, trotting his horse from behind the cattalo paddock.

Returning hope gave her voice.

"Help, help!" she screamed to him. "He's going to tear down the cherry tree. He'll soon have it down!"

Whit whirled his horse, snatched his throwing rope from the saddle, and began building a loop.

He had complete confidence in his own skill and contempt for the clumsy looking shaggy monster.

Quite evidently Whit felt he could run a circle around Caliban, draw him off, and rope him at leisure.

"Shoot him," Lyria shrieked. "Don't tie to him. Kill him!"

But Whit came on.

The catalo suddenly sprang into a gallop and ran in a curve aroud the cherry tree putting Whit on the inside toward the tree.

Whit made his cast on the second round. But as he made it, the bull turned on a pivot, toward Whit, and flashed alongside the rider, making a sideward dagger thrust at the chestnut's middle.

He missed but the impact flung the horse and his rider against the loose-rooted little tree.

The shock of the rider and the horse hurled the small, fragile cherry tree down with a crash. In an instant Lyria, Whit, the horse, all were at Caliban's feet, his split hooves threatening to trample them, his dagger horns to mangle them.

The horse was stunned, possibly dead. Whit lay near his mount, unconscious among the leaves and branches of the cherry tree.

Like a hound-trailed hare, crouching in its form, hoping against hope the dog may pass by, Lyria also lay there, motionless, aware that if the bull believed all his objects of hate were dead, he might turn and wander away in search of new adventures. Especially as the horse and his possibly dead rider lay between her and Caliban.

Prostrate among the interlaced slender foliage, she tried not to breathe, but she could do nothing with the loud and frantic beating of her heart which seemed trying to batter its way out of her side.

My heart will draw him round to me she thought, dizzy with horror. My own heart will kill me.

And as she thought this, Caliban came around the horse to the fallen treetop and the prostrate girl.

His snuffling, as he searched for her, the feel of his steamy breath, was too much for her. Lyria fainted.

"You've got high ideals, Lyria," Neith said. "You want to marry for love alone, as love to you is a mixture of many beautiful things"

CHAPTER III
Jealousy

CONSCIOUSNESS returned to Lyria with the sharp clarity of her healthy youth, but under circumstances which surprised her. She was no longer in the fallen tree. She was lying in soft grass and a thrilling baritone voice was pleading with her.

"Don't die! You're too lovely to die."

She was lying in the curve of a man's arm as he partly supported her.

She came to her feet with a swiftness that amazed him.

"The bull—Caliban!" she cried to him.

The man had risen with her. He slid an arm around her as if fearful she might faint again. He pointed,

"Yonder, snubbed to the oak. Regular old son of Satan, he is. You had me worried. I thought you really were dead."

She was safe! And this rider, whose arm was around her, whose coming seemed a miracle, was Neith Nelson. As he drew her closer, she felt his warm vitality, the magnetism of his youth, steadying her, bringing her terror-stirred pulses back to normal. She was safe, unhurt. Life, exquisite, delicious, was hers again. She quite forgot Robina in those first seconds and, in her confusion, she thought Whit had ridden away.

A bitter snarling voice startled her.

"Cut out that fooling, Neith, and get this branch off of me," Whit said.

Neith Nelson smiled at her, helped her to rise, and then hurried over to where Whit, black browed and raging, lay pinned down by a heavy bough of the cherry tree.

Using Whit's rope and Bill Darnel's horse, Neith soon released Whit from the dead weight and then carefully helped him to rise.

"All right, Whit?" he asked quietly.

Whit growled an ungracious affirmative. He hadn't been there long enough to stiffen up and he evidently had suffered nothing worse than bruises, so far as his body went, but he was mentally badly damaged in his most precious possession, his personal vanity. He had not only been outwitted by Caliban in the attempted rescue, he had been overthrown and then rescued by his arena rival, Neith Nelson. And after that rescue he had seen Lyria Darnel in Neith's arms and had observed her look of radiant, almost adoring, gratitude toward Neith.

Until Whit recently had been given information concerning a letter he might get, Lyria had been just one more girl to try and impress. But if that tip proved a sound one, then Lyria would assume an enormous importance in Whit's tangled affairs.

Ignorant of the reason for Whit's sudden interest, Lyria paid no further attention to him, now she knew he was unhurt. Her gaze remained fixed on the other rodeo star and she was absorbing Neith's presence as though it were sunlight itself as he turned away from Whit and stood smiling at her.

"I never believed in guardian angels before, Neith," she said softly. "But I must have one. He must have sent you here."

Neith laughed, gay, easy laughter.

"Wish you could see that guardian angel. It was Hyena." He told her about Hyena, the field glasses.

"He thought it was very funny, Lyria," Neith added with sudden grimness.

"Funny!" She flushed with anger; then her irritation vanished. "Oh, Neith, how odd life is. But for Hyena's horrible enjoyment, he'd never have forced the glasses on you, and you'd never have seen what was happening here. Neith, maybe it was my guardian angel using Hyena to send you to my rescue?" Then for the first time she noticed the horse Neith had ridden. "How come you got Dad's gelding?"

NEITH laughed again. "I'm a horsethief, Lyria, and he darned near drilled me for one." He told her of the wagon incident. As he talked, her vivid young imagination showed her the scene, and her deep gratitude to Neith increased accordingly. He had taken this fearful risk for her! He had been shot at for her sake!

In this critical moment her day dream of a man, meant, so she believed, for her alone, flowered into new beauty. Then the disturbing memory of Robina swept like a black cloud across her cheerfulness. She knew the ranchwoman slightly, but the difference in their ages had always made Lyria shy of the older woman. Lyria Darnel wasn't yet of age but Robina was getting close to thirty.

Then as though the thought of Robina had conjured up an appearance, the older woman suddenly appeared from behind the cattalo pen, riding smartly toward the group of people near the fallen fruit tree.

Robina Vane was a skilled horsewoman.

Booted and spurred, she looked well in the saddle. The Western sun showed the bland smoothness of her slightly tanned face. Her large, pale eyes were heavy lidded but silk fringed. They were peculiar eyes but handsome in their way. Indeed the whole woman was handsome and coolly suave. Her glance at Lyria as she arrived was curious yet friendly, and the look she threw at Neith warmly pleased. She spoke in a husky but rather sweet voice.

"These idiotic catalo seem quite a magnet," Robina said. "And it appears the bull's been busy. Who managed to snub the devil, Lyria?"

Lyria briefly recounted what had occurred, so far as she knew it. Whit stood near her. He set fire to a cigarette and smoked, sullenly offended by Lyria's praise of Neith. Nor was Lyria happy in praising him, fearing that every word would make Robina more determined than ever to hold onto Neith.

"You sure are a ridin' son-of-a-gun, Neith," Robina said warmly, in a half teasing tone. "Now you'll be more famous than ever."

She turned her pale eyes a little mockingly on Whit.

"Wish I knew who let that darn catalo out," Whit snarled. "I'd make him chase after my horse."

Blandness disappeared from Robina's face. Her big, pale colored eyes widened in a piercing stare at him.

"Look in the next mirror you see," she said dryly. "Charge what happened to the man you see there."

Whit turned red and scowled angrily through the redness,

"What the devil do you mean?"

"When I stopped at the catalo pen just now to see if the bar was on—after I saw the bull was out—I found the gate ajar. I latched and barred it. It's a wonder the other cataloes hadn't discovered they could leave."

"Which has nothing to do with me!"

"Your horse tracks were there. At the gate."

"That doesn't prove—"

Robina cut in on him.

"You leaned too far over the gate," she said coolly. "Your hat fell inside. You got down from the gate, unbarred it, then unlatched it, slipped inside, grabbed the hat and slipped out—fast. You re-latched the gate, but you forgot to bar it. When the bull worked at the latch with his horn, he got it open. If you had put up that outside bar, he never could have gotten the gate open."

"You ought to write yarns instead of trying to run your scrubby little ranch," Whit said angrily. "It's all a lie!"

"Later you remembered about the bar and came galloping back," Robina went on smoothly. "That's how you happened to arrive here."

"Ridiculous!"

"All right. You handled the bar with bare hands, because you'd been eating a chocolate bar. There's chocolate on the bar and a smudge of it on the back of your left hand. Above your hatband there are also still several grains of ground-feed used for the cataloes."

LYRIA was startled by the really murderous look which Whit fixed on Robina.

Lyria thought, It's his own fault he got himself showed up for a liar.

She glanced at Neith and this time it was her turn to be hurt because he was gazing with unconcealed admiration on Robina.

Whether Whit would have said anything more in attempted rebuttal Lyria couldn't know, for the general attention was caught by the astonishing arrival of the black horse Neith had started out on. Neith had believed his fine horse dead.

The black was ridden by red headed and still infuriated Bill Darnel.

Neith grinned at him as Darnel checked to a sliding stop, his rage deflected by trying to read the whole meaning of the extraordinary scene before him—the prostrate cherry tree, the ripped and scattered branches, the snubbed and muttering bull, and his own red horse standing quietly, riderless. To his surprise the horse thief was grinning boldly at him and his daughter was standing near the horse thief and another rodeo rider, looking black as thunder, while Robina blandly was enjoying the situation.

"What the devil's been going on here?" demanded the puzzled Bill Darnel.

It was Lyria who soon made everything clear to him. These explanations over, impassioned explanations, big Bill Darnel grinned and turned to Neith.

"Feller, I never thought I'd live to apologise to a horse thief for stealing my best horse right under my nose," he said. "But from now on my ranch belongs to you for as long as you like whenever you feel like

stayin' with us."

Neith smiled at him. "Thanks."

Loafing in his worn saddle, Bill Darnel studied the rodeo star from head to foot and Lyria, who could read her father's face like an open book, knew what he was saying to himself.

"Here's the kind of son-in-law I want."

"And here's the kind you don't get," Lyria thought in lonely despair.

The glowing sunlight grew cold around her. A chill wind seemed to touch her sensitive, warm young face. She felt, without shaping it into words, that the fire of Neith's lips would never touch her's. Here she stood alone, in an isolation greater than any which distance could make. She was no longer grateful for the gift of life. Life belonged to Robina, because love is life, and love burned in Robina and Neith for each other.

"Lyria, Robina spoke to you," Bill Darnel growled.

"Oh!" Lyria turned swiftly. "You said?"

Robina smiled in her reserved way.

"That perhaps you'd see the afternoon rodeo with me? I've tickets, good seats, close to the arena."

For perhaps a second Lyria stared at her, thrown off guard. Through Lyria's mind whirled confusing thoughts. What was Robina trying to do? Was this a challenge? Or was she just anxious to show Lyria how secure she was of Neith's love, having no jealousy of any one?

Lyria thought, How better can I hide my heart than by accepting? Than by showing her how pleased I am that he is hers?

"Thank you," she answered quietly. "I'll go with you."

CHAPTER IV
Rodeo Glamour

YOUTH is seldom aware of life's little ironies, but, sitting beside Robina Vane in those very good ringside seats at the afternoon rodeo, Lyria thought bitterly of the cruel twist in events. At first sight of Neith, she had so looked forward to watching him in the arena, watching him all by herself and dreaming of how, through that marvelous week, they would learn deeply, wonderfully, that fate had planned them for each other.

Instead she was not alone in her watching. Beside her sat the poised, rather exotic looking girl to whom Neith was pledged—the secure, untroubled woman, smooth voiced and unforgettable!

Lyria thought, Why did I act on a defiant impulse and accept her invitation? Why did I come to the rodeo at all?

"You couldn't keep away," her throbbing heart answered her. "You would see him again at any cost."

She felt that cost was very high because when she stole a look at Robina there was a look of happiness on Robina's face too great to be caused by a mere afternoon at the rodeo.

She's thinking of Neith! To her every second must seem like a month until he comes into the arena. Why did I accept her hateful invitation? Why didn't I hide myself somewhere else in the tiers of seats. Why did I meet her challenge of friendship? Why try to prove to her I didn't care? Right now she doesn't know that I exist!

Both girls were in riding clothes, breeches smartly fitted and of fine whipcord. Their white linen shirts were belted over the riding trousers by intricately carved leather belts. In honor of the rodeo each was wearing a colorful cowboy vest and somehow each girl looked all the more feminine for it.

Abruptly Robina turned to Lyria and made a remark in her rather husky but pleasantly toned voice.

"Funny, isn't it, Lyria, how just a few words from the most important man in the world can change everything?" Robina murmured. "The skies are bluer today, and the wind is sweeter. I'm looking forward to a happiness I once never thought to have." She paused, then purred on, "Isn't it nice that Neith, by getting up early, can have half a day on his own before parade time? I think he's a prince."

Lyria thought, And you pick *me* as your confidante. A hot surge of resentment swelled in her lonely heart.

She looked across the arena. It was empty of performers as yet. But tier after tier of seats in the grandstand was filled with a pleased and joyously anticipatory crowd. She sighed. All of these people were happy because they had fallen victims of vain dreams. Nothing can be as cruel as a vain dream. No, Neith wasn't intended for Lyria. But why had he so fully fulfilled what she had envisioned in appearance, in voice, in courage. Lyria's mind—alert, restless, seeking—kept

turning these questions over without finding any solution.

Now, to the crash of fine music, the Grand Entry parade was sweeping in, riders pouring into the arena carrying silken flags which rippled in the afternoon breeze.

They came in slowly, the glossy, high headed horses moving proudly, the riders at careless ease. The men sat erect but without the slight stiffness of military riders. These rodeo contestants seemed so much a pliant part of their mounts that one might have fancied this was forever their life—riding to music, free from the worries that beset other, more commonplace people.

As the last rank came in, the whole body, as though it was moved instinctively by the same thought, swung into a sweeping gallop and moved in an intricate, interchanging series of figures gay and martial.

The audience cheered them then settled down blissfully to enjoy, vicariously, peril in the arena while they themselves were quite safe.

ROBINA was flushed and eager, and joined loudly in the applause. She glanced with surprise at Lyria's hands which lay idle in her lap, fingers locked together.

"Watch," Robina caught her arm. "Here comes Neith."

"I see him," Lyria said coldly, but under that chill tone her young pulses were throbbing to the beat of his horses hoofs.

He swept by them, but did not turn his head.

Robina released Lyria, then spoke warmly, in almost a purring intonation.

"Isn't he wonderful?" she asked.

Lyria didn't need Robina to tell her that! She had known from the first second she had seen Neith how wonderful he was. Robina was too old for Neith by five or six years. How had Robina made Neith love her?

Since Lyria hadn't answered, Robina glanced at her and shrugged faintly.

Lyria caught the movement. It seemed to her full of contemptuous security. Fearful of self betrayal Lyria feigned indifference.

"He's quite a good rider, but the West is full of them," she remarked.

Full of men like Neith? The ready lie was quassia, bitter on her lips. The crowd swallowed him. Then in the stormy whirlpool of her mind something self-accusatory rose against her, the remembered conversation between two men sitting behind her on a train.

"All it comes to is this, Horrocks. A girl or man some time in childhood is fascinated by a figure in a play or even in a picture and carries the type continually in mind. Finally the child, growing older, forgets the source of the memory. This memory enters into a day dream and later the adolescent broods on it. The figure may be the tenth or the fifteenth type of human, there aren't so many you know. Likely enough the man or girl eventually runs into a human of the selected type and becomes captivated."

"You see?" taunted her quick intelligence. "That's all there was to it. He's merely the fifteenth type. Nothing to do with destiny. Somewhere you saw a picture, a photograph, maybe when you were very little. You liked it and fixed the type in your stupid, receptive mind. Then you grew up, and remembered the type—and dreamed about it—fitting your fancies on to it. Dangling them on it. You fool! You brainless, dreaming little fool!"

Reason accepted this, but deep down, under all reason, where the strange instincts of the subconscious mind lie, a dim but not quite

[*Turn page*]

smothered belief cried out against reason, against rationalizing theory, asserting faintly but doggedly, "You were meant for each other."

Trick riding and rope spinning sifted by unseen by Lyria. But when the bulldogging brought Neith into the arena her gaze sped to him and ignored Whit who also followed an allotted steer. Whit's was black. That of Neith was a deep red.

She saw Neith, swift as a greyhound, plunge from his saddle. Lyria experienced a sudden, chilling fright for him, she was sure he had missed his steer.

Then she saw his muscular, powerful figure outlined against the blood-red body of the animal, saw Neith's hands locked on the steer's horns, knew his high boot heels were digging into the earth as he braked his quarry to a halt and began the mute struggle with the sullen, angry red beast.

THE spectators watched eagerly. Frequent bets were quickly made. Some watchers believed that he would throw the steer in record time, other persons were sure that he would never throw so heavy an animal.

It seemed to Lyria no man could ever overcome this great brute. He was too big, too firmly set, and she almost rubbed her eyes incredulously when the large red went flat to earth.

She heard the time announced—and didn't note it, because records meant nothing to her. Talk about them from the announcer were mere sounds. What counted was what she saw herself in the arena concerning Neith's safety, his peril, or his triumphs.

"Neith's beaten Whit's record again," Robina said happily.

Lyria nodded absently.

Then came the announcement she especially dreaded.

"Neith Nelson on Your Last Ride. Chute Three."

Even the name of the horse was bad luck, she thought. That name carried sinister implications. And indeed it seemed that the big rawboned angry roan would more than justify what they called him. He appeared to be made of whalebone, so elastic to his fury were his raging twists, turns and mad pitching.

"That horse will throw him and trample him," she cried through fear stiffened lips. She had not meant to speak aloud, but she had, and Robina turned quickly.

"Five to ten he rides it out," Robina offered.

Lyria didn't answer, she didn't hear Robina and the ranchgirl shrugged, sneered faintly, and turned away.

When the time signal sounded and Neith still rode the raging Your Last Ride, Lyria gave a little low gasp of relief. She watched tensely as he slid onto the closely pressing horse of a hazer. Your Last Ride, bawling with fury and general hate of mankind, went bucking out of the arena.

She looked at her program.

Next would come the Cowboy Hurdle Race. Already men were setting the hurdles and there was to be a final test meant to show skill and horsemanship instead of jumping.

There was a double set of hazards, hurdles that rose at intervals on the center stretch in the oval arena, and on the outer stretch two extra hazards which would be encountered during the last lap of the race.

On the center route of danger six horses flashed away to a good start. In the lead were two frosty roans ridden by men not known to Lyria. They took the two first jumps in good shape, but at the third jump both horses came croppers. A stretcher took one of the men from the arena, the other limped from the field under his own power and passed through a side door used by those on foot. The two roan horses, looking silly and bewildered, were hurried off by hazers.

"Those hurdles are too high," Lyria said in a low indignant tone. "Are they trying to kill their own men?"

Robina shrugged. "Crowds wouldn't come to see horses step over a two-inch high obstruction."

"You've no heart," muttered Lyria. "Since you're not in danger, what do you care."

Robina turned and looked at her oddly. A moment later her exotic slanted eyes were veiled by her long lashes.

"Down goes Phil Brent," she said coolly. "But he's up again. His horse has a sprained shoulder. Now Concannon's ahead, he's over weight for that gray of his. See—he didn't quite clear that jump. Another hard fall, and they're going off the field. Now it's a straight duel between Neith and Whit! There they go side by side like loving friends when Whit's hoping Neith breaks his neck. Whit's a vicious devil!"

"I wish the race was over," Lyria said, watching anxiously.

Neith and Whit completed the inner stretch safely and now they rode the outer stretch. They took a high jump in unison. Before them lay the last hazard, a peculiar test of riding skill.

Lyria caught the voices of two men directly behind her.

"See what Whit Warringer's doing?"

"What?"

"He ain't riding to win—he's riding to lose."

"Reckon?"

"Watch close. Inch by inch Whit's palomino is falling back. He ought to be in the lead. I tell you I know the horse—know both the horses. Neith's just ain't got the speed. The race is fixed."

Color rose on Lyria's lovely face. She twisted around.

"That isn't done in rodeos," she said in a low clear tone to the speakers. "They ride clean."

The man gazed at her in frank pleasure. When he answered there was a whimsical touch in his tone.

"Whatever you say—is so!"

Neith's black was sharply in the lead now. Before him lay a hard test of skill, a narrow plank, led up to by a wooden incline, and there was another leading down from it.

One slip and death might follow—Neith's death!

CHAPTER V

Bitter-Sweet

LYRIA felt a sudden sense of fright for him. Why did they set up these risks? It would take great skill and poise in the rider to cross safely, rushing his horse up the incline too fast for the animal to realize what he must cross, and then holding him to the hairline of safety.

Safety? There was no safety anywhere. If life happened to be peaceful, men went ahead and invented new dangers and other men sat up in rows—yes, and women too—and thrilled in watching those in the arena skirt the disaster. People talked about peace and loved to see men pitted against death. She hated the crowd. She looked at Robina, and Robina smiled suavely at her.

"Exciting, isn't it?" Robina asked.

Lyria's answer was a glance of such bitterness that Robina's pale eyes widened. Lyria's gaze sped back to Neith.

He was rushing his black up the incline. Half a second and the horse was on the plank, keeping the hair line of safety with instinctive and exquisite skill, sustained by the equal skill and electric confidence of his rider.

They were crossing into the second half of the plank when a loud sharp cracking sound snapped out like a rovolver. The plank broke in the middle.

Your last ride! The sentence leapt at Lyria. And that loud, sharp, breaking seemed to her to have been something breaking in her own wildly terrified heart.

When a man is accustomed to riding with danger, he has his reasoning conscious mind to act from. But the use of reason means a process and sometimes danger jumps from its jungle with appalling swiftness, leaving no time for processes. Then the rider acts from that invisible self which some call the subconscious mind and some an instinct developed in the hardy and the self-reliant.

Without time to reason, Neith knew the second he heard the cracking sound begin, that if he went down into the V the breaking ends would make he would have scant chance of escaping grave injury.

With a twist of his reins to the right, his body slanting slightly in the same direction, he flung the black into a take-off from the gangway, fully aware as he did so that he might still have a spill which would kill him. But nevertheless he had an even chance of coming through alive.

IF HE didn't have excessive speed the glossy black had muscles that would have done credit in suppleness, in resilience, to any big cat—and like a cat he landed just as the heavy plank ends touched earth.

A roar of applause went up from the spectators.

* * * * *

Rodeo week was speeding by far too fast.

At night Lyria, often awake while her father's ranch slept, asked herself that heart shaking question common to those who must lose out in love: Shall I ever be able to forget him?

Forgetfulness! That would bring peace. She who had hoped and expected joy in life, radiant joy with love at her side, now asked only the one thing left—peace.

No peace could she find, not so long as the

rodeo remained in town. She could not deny herself the torment of seeing him whenever she could. The bitter sweet torment of filling her eyes with his image, of listening to him talk, and thrilling to the magic of his smile was a temptation she was utterly unable to resist.

She asked herself in despair, how could love possess her so deeply at first sight as though she had known him months. She didn't realize that because he fitted her dream, she had, in a way, known him and waited for him all her life. Her whole being, physical, mental, spiritual, had moved secretly, passionately toward him when he appeared. Rich and beautiful dreams had enchanted her, and then abandoned her in a land of dust and ashes where only pride sustained her.

That at least was left, and pride is a weapon and a shield to the high in heart.

Much as Bill Darnel loved her, she could not go to her tempestous father for sympathy over her blighted hopes.

"Plenty more men," Bill would have roared at her. "Leave Robina's man alone. Forget him. He'll soon be gone away anyhow." So she told Bill nothing of her troubles and he continued to hope that Lyria and Neith might become interested in each other.

She often sought comfort in her horse, as many a troubled rider has done, and one day, as usual, rode off alone into the outside country, leaving direction to her mount, not caring particularly where he went.

The horse loped along serenely for some miles, pleased with his own guidance. Then he pricked up his ears, whinnied loudly and stopped—just as Neith Nelson rode out of the chaparral.

Gaily he asked if he might ride a couple of miles with her, after that he must turn off to a rendezvous.

With Robina, Lyria thought. Aloud she said quietly she would like to have Neith companion her. As they moved on together, she hoped he wouldn't hear the over emphatic drumming of her heart at his presence. How loud it sounded in her own ears.

"You've not found yet who sawed that plank?" she said slowly.

He shrugged. His fine eyes darkened.

"Whit, of course! But there's no proof." He smiled carelessly. "Once Whit starts in hating a man, as he does me, there's a steady ferocity in his hate . . . and a queer lot of unpredictable cunning."

"What do you mean by that?" Her voice was uneasy.

"Unpredictable because Whit doesn't keep to the beaten track in getting his way. He is fertile in evil ideas, and cold hearted as a government mule in carrying them out. You look worried, Lyria. Why?"

"What you said did worry me—a little—in my own affairs—about Whit."

He turned in his saddle leaning slightly toward her, his compelling eyes warm with sympathy.

"Tell me, Lyria, what's wrong?"

HERE was what she craved, someone who could at least understand a sudden problem with which she had been confronted, a problem presented by Whit who had gotten the letter he hoped for. True she thought she had disposed of Whit and his problem but in the back of her mind she wanted reassurance.

Yet her mind was divided, a desire to tell Neith was countered by a feeling that it was ridiculous to go to Robina's sweetheart with her troubles.

"Lyria, don't keep trying to stand so much alone," Neith urged her. "Such a proud, aloof little wench!"

His tone, whimsically kind and gentle, decided her.

"It's Whit," she said angrily.

"Yes, Lyria? Whit?"

"He insulted me," she said fiercely, her eyes flashing.

"I'll make him wish he hadn't. He—" The storm in Neith's face made her interrupt him.

"No, no, no!" she cried. "You mustn't dream of taking it up. He didn't mean it as an insult. He thinks money is the highest thing in life. He couldn't know how cold-blooded—how down-right offensive he was being."

"Let's hear this thing he couldn't know was offensive," Neith said dryly. "He doesn't strike me as being so unsophisticated—that he could be insulting and not know it."

"Well, he came to me all excited. He said he'd something marvelous to tell me. I was just ready to go out riding, so I said he could ride with me and I'd hear what he had to tell. Oh, I don't know why I am troubling you with this." She flushed, there were tears in her eyes.

"We'll stop for a little while at this spring, Lyria, and because I'm your friend, you'll tell me everything."

CHAPTER VI

At the Silver Spring

FROM under a great gray arch of rock the little silver spring danced and laughed its way into the open, scattering cool jewels as it went. A thousand lovers had drunk at this spring in the past centuries and then had followed the long trail into that far land of beauty where there is no parting. But today the waters belonged to Neith and Lyria who let their horses graze while Neith, sitting by her on a flat rock, watched her draw from her riding coat pocket a letter.

She slowly gave him her story.

"Whit told me, though I knew it already, that he had a frightfully rich grandfather who was going to leave everything to his frightfully rich sister," she said. "Whit was sullen and sore about his grand-aunt being the heir."

"I gather Whit wasn't—or isn't—in favor with the old folks, if they knew his record generally?"

"You're right. Old Mr. Warringer doesn't like Whit. Or didn't until recently when Whit succeeded in making him believe he—Whit, I mean—had turned over a new leaf and had become all a Warringer ought to be. At least Grandfather Warringer wanted to believe it. So he wrote Whit a perfectly crazy letter, and Whit, blazing with excitement, brought it to me. Read it please."

Neith read the feeble, scrawly writing.

Grandson Whit,

Doctor Leavitt tells me my time is short. Maybe he's right. Anyhow my mind rests in the past now, and turns often on the woman I loved, the woman who married Bill Darnel. She was star shine and sweetness. No man will ever again love a woman as I loved Lyria Grey. No man will ever hate again as I hate Darnel.

A year ago I made it a point to come secretly to Cabarras and see Lyria's daughter, Lyria second. In this lovely girl there is nothing of Darnel, everything of my Lyria!

If you will marry this daughter of my Lyria, and afford proof of your marriage, I will make a will leaving my fortune to your Lyria's first child. The fortune will remain in trust after your marriage until the child is born. But a certain sum will be provided to support your Lyria in luxury for five years. If, in that time, there's no heir, the fortune goes to my sister. Lyria, your Lyria, will be appointed guardian for her heir, if that baby is born within five years.

You are young, handsome, agreeable if you choose to be, and you claim you're a new man. If you can't, with all your advantages, win this second Lyria, you aren't worth another thought.

Neith stared at the letter he had finished reading. He looked stern and aghast.

"Lyria, this letter is dynamite," he said slowly. "The minute you get home, sit down and write old Warringer that you don't like Whit and will never marry him."

"Old Mr. Warringer is dead, Neith. Finding he was dying, he hurriedly made the will that you've just read about in Whit's letter. His sister, who's old now, wrote and told me so. I've warned Whit I wouldn't marry him for ten fortunes. Even if I did, the money would be the heir's not his. I pointed that out to him, too."

"And he laughed?"

She looked startled. "How did you know?"

"It amused him to think how he would compel you, his wife, to let him be guardian in fact while you held the empty name. Lyria, this will of old Warringer's will make trouble for you. You'll marry Whit, I'm afraid."

HE SPRANG up and walked restlessly up and down as though trying to think of some way out of the difficulty for her.

"How can you say such a thing?" she retorted indignantly. "I hate Whit."

She rose with obvious impatience.

"You've got high ideals, Lyria," he said quietly. "You want to marry for love alone. Love to you is a mixture of many beautiful things, which you hope will fill your life. But to a man like Whit, love is just another experience. You wouldn't sell your happiness for all this money. To get it Whit would make love to a dozen women. He wants money for the power it gives, the power to get what Whit likes. He loathes work, and he is broke and ruthless. He's also cunning and dangerous."

"Dangerous!" she said scornfully. "These are modern days. He can't compel me to marry him."

Neith Nelson frowned. "I'm not so sure he can't."

"How?" The scorn in her voice for Whit deepened.

"I don't know, Lyria. But this is an enormous fortune that's held out to him—through you. Remember I said cunning as well as dangerous. Whew! What a stupid will!"

"Not stupid, Neith. John Warringer loved my mother. His love never died and his love

wrote the will."

"It's a booby trap, Lyria, for you," he added sharply. "You've no idea, I see, what a fortune means to a stony broke, self centered clever man like Whit."

"Nonsense!" she said proudly. "I'm my own mistress. Whit—a booby trap! That's really ridiculous!"

He looked at her doubtfully.

"You could tell him you are engaged," he said slowly.

Lyria stared, then flushed.

"Engaged? Who could I pretend I was engaged to?"

"To me, if you like," he said coolly.

She paled.

"To you?" His light coolness struck at her heart. "What would Robina say?"

"Robina?" he said just as coolly. "I'd tell her all about it. I've no secrets from Robina. She's wonderful."

Loneliness surged up in Lyria, and vain longing. How certain these two, Robina and Neith, must be of each other! What other man could dare afford to tell his girl that he was pretending to be engaged to another girl. Suddenly she was shocked by the realization that Neith must indeed think Whit ruthless and cunning, must indeed dread Whit's vengeance since Neith believed that she, Lyria, needed the shield of Neith's name so desperately.

But could Neith's estimation of Whit be wrong? What on earth could Whit do? In her innocence she believed he wouldn't dare molest her personally. She forgot the way a large slice of the human race had gone berserk quite recently in spite of its supposed civilization. She forgot that, in his war years, a man like Whit might have become blunted to many things.

"Whit hates me," Neith went on. "With you out of reach, he'd turn all his attention on me."

"Why should he hate you?" Looking at him she told herself that he ought to arouse in others only admiration and love.

Neith shrugged.

"He thinks he's got reason enough. Do you ever analyze people, Lyria?"

"Analyze?"

"I mean sort out the qualities that form their minds. Then you know what to expect of them. For instance Whit is a compound of vanity, cruelty and vindictiveness. We knew each other as boys. He was always that way. Well, at our last town, Whit and I were out riding in the same direction but he was ahead. When I caught up with him on the road, he was having sport."

"Sport?"

NEITH nodded his head and frowned as he recalled the scene.

"He'd run into one of those pack-peddlers who cross from place to place on foot. Whit was making him dance by shooting up the dust around him. The man was old; his pack was heavy; he was nearly fainting from terror and exhaustion. I interfered. Whit whirled his horse alongside me and tried to crack me in the head with his gunbarrel. I ducked—and knocked him off his horse. That was bad enough, to Whit but, worse yet. As usual, when a man's humiliated, a girl Whit was interested in came riding up behind us. She'd seen the whole thing.

"Whit had landed on his head. Reckon it ached. The girl called him brutal and washed her hands of him. She's wealthy. Whit intended to marry her. He believed she sacked him because he got knocked off his horse and had to scramble up out of the dust. He couldn't believe it was because of his cruelty to the old man. For Whit is like that fellow Hyena—the kind of fellow who really enjoys pain in others. There are more people like that than you'd think, Lyria. Being what he is, Whit believed she sacked him because he had been made ridiculous—landing on his head. He was burned up. He'd been made absurd, and he'd lost his chance to marry money."

"He must be a real miser," Lyria said.

Neith shook his head.

"Not like a miser. Whit wants money to spend on Whit, he's poor and poverty nearly kills him." Suddenly he glanced at his watch. "Gosh! I'm late for my rendezvous! I'll cut across from here and ride hard. Lyria, watch Whit. Call on me the minute you need me. Right now I'm meeting Robina."

He was gone.

Lyria lingered at the spring.

While she stood staring unseeingly at the spring's silver water, a new thought, like a jeweled light, flashed into her lonely mind.

Perhaps it was all a mistake about Neith's loving Robina. Who could tell her the real truth except Neith himself, or both Neith and Robina together?

She thought, I'll follow his tracks, find them, make some excuse for joining them, and then I'll ask them outright, When are you

going to marry?

Her pursuit was not difficult. Where the tracks turned into a narrow and hard trail she left her horse and went lightly down the trail and came into a stretch of rough forest, not because she couldn't have ridden the precipitous trail but because it seemed better to approach without noise so she could turn and withdraw unseen, unheard, if some glimpse of them warned her not to interrupt them.

In this way she came close, and saw them in front of her, framed in an opening where a tangle of vines had been pulled aside. For a second she thought something stirred behind her. She turned, saw nothing, turned again to the peek hole.

They stood close together. She saw Neith lift Robina's palm to his lips and gently let her hand go. It was her right hand. He murmured, but the unhappy watcher could not catch what he said.

What she saw was enough, however, for now Neith lifted Robina's left hand, drew a ring from his pocket and slipped it on her finger. There in the sunlight the big ruby scintillated with fire. Robina raised her hand, looked at the stone's beauty, then spoke clearly to Neith.

"It's perfect!"

Lyria saw no more. Tears blurred her vision. She turned swiftly away and went back along the trail, but lightly, softly, feeling that now she would die if those two detected her. Unseen, unheard by those two she got back to her horse.

CHAPTER VII

Gift to Lyria

THAT night she walked her floor, and when she finally got in bed, slept only in broken snatches.

In one of these she dreamed Robina was in immediate danger and calling for help, but that she, herself, would not stir to save her. "When you are gone and forgotten," Lyria told Robina in her dream, "I shall win Neith. He must have someone to love."

She woke with Robina's anguished dream cry of despair ringing in her ears.

"If only Robina were dead," she thought bitterly.

Before dawn Lyria dressed, made herself some coffee. When the sun rose, she was in the saddle and gone, after a word to Bill Darnel, for exhaustion is a good medicine for hopeless love. If she tired herself enough today, tonight she might sleep. She rode without any special direction, so Logan, her pony chose it for her. Finally he slacked to a walk.

When at last he heard the shrilling of a silver whistle, he called Lyria's attention to it by stopping abruptly and pricking up his ears toward the sound.

Lyria instantly knew the sound. It came from a powerful but sweet silver whistle Neith had given Robina.

The whistle came again, calling imperiously—calling—calling. . . .

Lyria thought, Robina whistles Neith to her as though he were a dog. I hope he never hears her—never! Wanting him for some stupid caprice of hers!

Then faintly on the down wind came a voice that was like a hoarse whisper.

"Neith! Neith!"

It was a strange, strained voice. Then came a long and piercing scream.

Greatly startled Lyria stiffened.

"Somebody trying to kill her," she said to herself. "Robina's got her gun. Why doesn't she use it? I have no gun—they might kill me. Why should I be murdered for Robina? . . . Why should I go near her, my rival?"

But fast as Lyria's thoughts were, she rode nearly as fast up the rise before her and went swooping down the other side. She saw that Robina seemed to have gone in swimming, only that innocent looking, bubbly looking water had no solid bed. The horrible part of it all was that only Robina's head, shoulders and upheld arms were visible.

She was caught in the Quarrier quicksands!

ALL thought of self vanished from Lyria's mind. Racing up as close as she dared, calling encouragement, she sprang from her horse, and cast the lariat she always carried by Bill Darnel's orders, over Robina's shoulders. It tightened under Robina's arm. Very slowly and quietly Lyria's horse, led by his bit, began to pull.

High over head a hawk screamed, then floated in air almost motionless. From the south a vulture drifted toward the quicksand watching with his long visioned powerful

eyes in hope of prey.

To Lyria's consternation, the sullen quicksand fought for its victim like something alive, and the horse had to exercise a pressure that was, Lyria knew, cutting cruelly into Robina.

Inch by inch the duel between horse and quagmire went slowly on, but when at last Robina's hips were out of the sucking mud below the shallow water it wasn't so difficult.

When Robina lay gasping, exhausted but safe on solid land, even her boots had been torn off in the battle for her body.

When she was able to talk she spoke faintly.

"My splendid horse," she moaned. "I almost died seeing him go under. The whole thing was hideous, thinking I'd die as he did. I'm sure grateful to you, Lyria."

Lyria shivered.

The hawk had vanished. The vulture still drifted around because Robina lay still on the earth.

Then Neith and his horse appeared.

Racing up to the edge of the water, he checked his horse to a swift stop his gaze reading every detail in the group before him. Lyria saw him whiten. He leaped from his horse and hurried to Robina.

"I crossed over from the other side," Robina said dolefully. "I mean I nearly crossed and then the quicksand got me. My horse is gone, Neith."

"It's evident Lyria got you out barely in time. Gosh, Robina, suppose Lyria hadn't just happened along. How deep in were you when she got you out?"

"Deep enough for me to have gone under if Lyria hadn't arrived," Robina said dryly, sitting up on the stunted grass. "You are late, Neith. But I reckon you were unavoidably delayed."

"So I was. But if I'd dreamed you were in danger, I'd have been here sooner." Neith dropped on his knees by her. "You don't feel any pain except from the rope cuts?" He was getting out his silver topped flask. "No? Thank heaven for that. Here, drink this. Quit trying to push it away. Drink!"

She obeyed the fiercely dictatorial tone. Now he sat beside her and took one of her hands in his.

"Robina, if you had died here through my being late at this rendezvous I'd never have known another peaceful minute."

Lyria was thinking, They have forgotten me. He is happy—happy because she is safe. He doesn't even think of thanking me. He remembers only that she is all right. I am glad I saved her, and I hate her! I would save her again but I'll always hate her. He loves her because her eyes are that queer pale color with those long dark lases. She's different and I'm just an ordinary, pretty type, such as you see everywhere. Even her voice is different—that funny smooth tone in it, like purring.

Quietly Lyria moved away from them, standing at her horse's shoulder. It whinnied to her, rubbed an affectionate head against hers, but there was no comfort in the horse, no comfort in anything because the world was a drab loneliness.

Now Neith was helping Robina up. When she had risen, he put an arm around her, Lyria heard his anxious inquiry.

"Steady on your pins, Robina?"

"Oh, yes."

Lyria, facing them now, thought despite her aching hurt, what a fine couple they made, though she barely glanced at Robina standing in her muddy stocking feet. Lyria's gaze remained on Neith, tall, distinguished, protective. Suddenly she heard him swear violently.

"No wonder you were caught in the quicksand, Robina! Somebody has moved the warning post."

"Oh!"

LYRIA saw Neith's fine face grow coldly grim. She came forward.

"Why that was attempted murder," Lyria exclaimed.

"Of course," Neith said bitterly.

"But why was it done?"

She checked herself, standing away from them because they didn't seem aware of her in their fierce absorption. Robina dropped her voice into low and secret tones, they murmured to each other, excluding Lyria, who paled, bit her lip and winked back the angry tears which tried to spill from her curling lashes.

She had saved Robina and now she herself was arrogantly ignored. Couldn't they at least have waited until she was out of sight.

She walked quietly back to her horse.

She set a polished boot toe in her left stirrup, the silver spur glittering in the sun, and rose silently up into the leather, touched Logan with both spurs and lifted him with her reins.

He jumped into a run.

Behind her two voices, blending in harmony, called to her. But she paid no attention.

Ignoring them, as they had ignored her, she sped off into distance.

But even then she thought, against her will, if he is friendly again, I will speak to him, yes, and to her. She shan't ever know that I care. . . .

Days passed, and nearer and nearer drew the brilliant rodeo's end, larger and larger grew the crowds pouring in to see it, gayer and happier their reactions to the joy of the unconventional week, but deeper grew the loneliness of the girl who moved among many people and scarcely knew they were there.

The Darnels had a competent sharp-featured housekeeper so that Lyria was free when she would have been better off, less miserable, if she had been occupied by demanding work. Her only source of consolation remained her horse, and now that morning broke again, she went from the breakfast table to the stalls. Bill Darnel was off on a business matter.

Logan greeted her with his usual friendly whinny but when she led him out of his box stall for saddling, she was unpleasantly surprised to find the horse was limping. There was something wrong with his right shoulder.

"How on earth did you manage to lame yourself?" she demanded indignantly. "You do have the oddest accidents, Logan."

She checked herself. A man came around the barn's north end, leading one of the most beautiful chestnut horses Lyria had ever seen. The chestnut was new to her. The man she recognized as deaf and dumb Marty.

She made an eager inquiring gesture toward the horse and Marty, smiling at her, offered her a note.

It was written in a sprawling hand.

> I didn't forget your birthday, daughter. This chestnut is for you. Don't change the bridle because his mouth is like silk and I've put on just the right bit. Have Marty saddle him and take a glorious gallop before I get back. Your loving dad,
>
> Bill.

She read hurriedly and sighed with relief. Immediately she had Marty saddle the chestnut. Perhaps on him the world would seem kinder.

The chestnut seemed to flash and sparkle with life, with the promise of swift motion. She set foot in the stirrups. The boy, smiling at her, released the rein as she settled down on the smooth leather.

The chestnut sprang into a fast, easy lope, held it for a few hundred yards and then, without signal from its rider, leaped into a run.

The horse's action was so delicious, the speed so exciting that Lyria let him have his head for a half mile, but she'd no intention of keeping up such a pace.

"Not so fast, Deliriously-Delightful! Not so fast!"

FIRMLY she drew down on the rein. The answer was even slightly faster speed. And the horse whirled into a side trail which she had had no idea of taking, and went racing down a rough incline.

Chaparral fled past. Jack rabbits jumped out of the way. Jays squawked at her reprovingly. A creek bank dipped down before them. Splash into the water went the chestnut, out he came on a short flat, and dashed on.

"Well, darn you!" gasped Lyria. "Regular bolter, nothing else but! Mouth like iron—and you know where you're going too."

She was more angry than frightened. Yet there was reason for fright, too. If the chestnut took to any timber or if he was going home and ran into a stall, he could easily kill her by ramming her into some obstruction high enough for him to pass under but not for her.

Now she saw, directly ahead, a combined barn and stable, with a gate leading into the barn yard.

The gate was closed.

Her mount came to a sliding stop that would have thrown an inexperienced rider, but only drew a little gasp of heartfelt relief from Lyria.

A heavy shouldered, broad faced smiling Mexican came sliding through the gate.

"Senorita, you ride like an angel! When I find thees weeked animal has been took away without hees brekfas' I grow fear this would happen. Always, if he is not fed, home he departs queekly."

"*Queekly* is rather mild for it," Lyria said dryly. In spite of her horsemanship, now she was safe, she felt a little shaken and much disgusted, for this beautiful horse was a true bolter who simply ignored bit-pain, a protagonist who assuredly made his own decisions.

"Thees stall doors are shut, senorita, so now I open thees gate and you ride him into

thees yard. And while thees animal eats thees food he so leetle deserve, my Dolores weel offer you, in my poor house, thees reffreechment." He bowed low. "My name ees Mendoza."

Lyria thanked him. She felt that a cup of coffee and a biscuit after her mad ride would be decidedly satisfactory.

"Did my father, Mr. Darnel, buy the chestnut from you?" she demanded.

He flung out his hand in a Latin gesture.

"Long story, senorita. In the house I tell you. Now thees horse need attention."

"I thought Pete Pollard, the nester, lived here?"

"No more Pete, senorita. It's me."

Mendoza called, pitching his voice high: "Dolores!"

Dolores, dark skinned and smiling, welcomed Lyria into the house and presently, seated in a rather picturesque living room, Lyria sipped hot black coffee. To this was added cold bread and canned peaches. Then Dolores left her alone.

Exasperated though she was by the way Bill Darnel had been cheated, Lyra was thoroughly enjoying Dolores' provender when she heard a drawling voice from the doorway.

"What a delightful surprise to see you here in my simple cabin," it said.

Starting to her feet, she turned to face Whit Warringer.

"You here!" she exclaimed.

"Obviously," he answered. "This is my cabin."

"Your cabin? You don't own house or land."

He sauntered easily toward the fireplace.

"Darling, I have rented it only yesterday so that in case you came this way you would have comfort."

She set down the cup and saucer she had been holding, stepped aside and stood staring at him, alert but not yet frightened. She was trying to understand a recent sequence, the lame horse which had no way to lame its self, the deaf and dumb Marty who could not be questioned, the deceptive, beautiful chestnut bolter purposely left unfed and coming back in a run to assuage his hunger, and the note in her pocket which she knew now was a forgery. All this was a pattern of Whit's weaving.

No wonder Neith had called him cunning. Whit had brought her here, into his crafty hands, through no violence and apparently of her own free will. The gossips would never believe the horse had really bolted, since the trail ended at the temporary cabin of a famous and handsome bachelor cowboy.

The whole thing had been a trap!

CHAPTER VIII
Cruel Choice

PROPPED against the wall by the mantelpiece, his attitude one of lazy assurance, Whit watched her as she stood thinking. At last she stirred slightly.

"What are your conclusions, Lyria?" he asked.

Slowly and steadily she told him the sequence, that it had been all his doing.

Listening he set fire to a cigarette. When she had finished, he made no effort to hide his admiration.

"Darling, you are intelligent," he said. "Can't you return the compliment by telling me how resourceful I am?"

Her eyes blazed and one of her small hands clenched. Anger shook her.

"You are just a hateful fool—wasting your time and mine."

"You are the fool, Lyria—a stupid ranch girl who doesn't understand the glory and the power of gold. I do understand it. The mere thought of it fires me." His voice rang with a harsh sincerity that was repeated in his burning eyes. "Sit down! I've something to explain."

The order was given in savage tones but instead of obeying she wheeled swiftly toward the hall door, just in time to see it closed by someone outside. She heard the key turn.

As swiftly she hurried to the other door. It also was locked and the key gone. She walked back to the fireplace.

"Sit down!" he repeated, sharply, scowling at her.

Again she didn't obey. He moved fast, caught her brutally by the shoulders and thrust her down into an arm chair with hard force. Then he flung himself into a chair opposite. She bit her lip, struggling for composure. She had been shocked by this demonstration of physical force. For the first time fear of him stirred in her.

[*Turn to page 32*]

TERRY TRAPPED THE ALIEN SMUGGLERS AND THEN . . .

HURRYING TO REACH HER UNCLE'S CAMP ON LAKE HURON BEFORE DARK, BETTY ADAMS STUMBLES UPON MYSTERIOUS DOINGS IN WATKINS COVE

SMUGGLERS!

HERE'S YOUR CUT, CORBETT . . . THREE HUNDRED BUCKS. GUIDE 'EM TO TONY'S SHACK AND YOU'RE THROUGH

OKAY, LOUIE. ANOTHER LOAD TOMORROW NIGHT?

HANDS UP!

YOU CAN SEE WHY I HAD TO COVER YOUR MOUTH . . . ONE PEEP WOULD HAVE SPOILED OUR SHOW

GRACIOUS! AND THE "SIGNALER" IS YOUR MAN!

SENATOR CONGDON'S CAMP, MISS? WHY YOU'RE THREE MILES OUT OF YOUR WAY

COME BACK TO BORDER PATROL HEADQUARTERS AND I'LL DRIVE YOU OVER

DO YOU MIND IF I USE YOUR PHONE? UNCLE HARRY MAY BE WORRIED

GO RIGHT AHEAD. MEANWHILE, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I'LL CLEAN UP

THIS BLADE'S A HONEY . . . THREE DAYS' WHISKERS GONE LIKE MAGIC!

THIN GILLETTES ARE PLENTY KEEN AND EASY SHAVING, TERRY

WHY, UNCLE, DO YOU KNOW MR. CORBETT?

KNOW HIM? WHY MAJOR CORBETT WAS MY BEST INTELLIGENCE OFFICER!

I'D BEEN PLANNING TO VISIT YOU AFTER I CRACKED THIS CASE, COLONEL . . . I MEAN SENATOR

YOU GET SMOOTH, REFRESHING SHAVES IN JIG-TIME WITH THIN GILLETTES. THEY'RE THE KEENEST, LONGEST-LASTING BLADES IN THE LOW-PRICE FIELD, AND BECAUSE THEY FIT YOUR GILLETTE RAZOR ACCURATELY, YOUR FACE IS PROTECTED FROM THE SCRAPE AND IRRITATION OF MISFIT BLADES. USE THIN GILLETTES

There was deep irritation in his voice and something close to hate in his eyes as he faced her.

"Lyria, for the last time in my life I've got a huge fortune in reach through you. You are a sheer fool regarding money affairs. You've never known what being broke means."

She interrupted him, her voice impatient, scornful, her fear lessening under his appeal.

"Other men work," she said. "Why not you? You're strong, well, young and capable. You—"

He cut her off with a gesture of exasperation.

"Other men work, yes, and are slaves to it. I mean to be free. We had to kill in the war to win freedom. I learned a lesson there. Kill if it's necessary to win freedom. Try and understand me."

She was aghast at the obvious sincerity of his sophistry. She began to perceive, though far from fully, that this great sum of money was to this man irresistible. For it he would commit anything, or forego anything, if only he could eventually play guardian, and really spender, to his grandfather's great fortune.

He made an obvious effort to throw off his irritation.

"Lyria!"

"Well, I'm listening."

Coolly, clearly and rather curtly he announced the program he had conceived for her.

"You're marrying me inside the hour. I've witnesses and a justice of the peace ready. I bought the license yesterday, but the clerk will keep it quiet until I release the news. I also bought the justice of the peace and the witnesses.

"You—"

He cut her off.

Wait. I know why you want to raise objections. You think you're in love with Nelson. No silly fancy like that is going to stand in my way."

SHE flushed and rose. Her expression was scornful.

"Whit, you're insufferable!"

"Sit down! Hear me! Sit down!"

Trembling with anger she dropped back into the chair.

"Whit."

Harshly his voice rode her protest down.

"Jealous of Robina, you trailed Neith. You found them hiding in the woods. *I* followed *you*. I stood hidden near you and watched your face as you watched them. When you saw them embrace, you turned pale."

"Stop! How dared you!"

He broke in harshly:

"I not only saw your face, I heard you whisper, as you moved away from them, 'Oh Neith, Neith! . . . if only you could have loved me!' I was amused." His lips curled into an insolent sneer.

"All right, I love him. Make the most of it!"

This time it was he who rose and began to walk up and down the room.

"I am going to make the most of it," he said. "So much the most of it that the man you think you love will practically put your hand in mine. It will, indirectly, be his office to give away the bride." He laughed, really amused.

Clutching the arms of the chair she leaned forward staring at him, baffled, perplexed by the riddle his words offered.

"I begin to think you are crazy, Whit."

"Neith Nelson is here, Lyria. Does that make my meaning plain?"

"Here?" she could only repeat. *"Neith?"* She started up.

"Yes. He's not starring and mopping up applause right now. He's incommunicado."

"What do you mean? Answer me!"

Whit shrugged, rose, tossed his cigarette into the fireplace.

"Oh he's the gallant knight kind," he drawled. "He likes to think of himself that way. So I got a message to him that you were pinned down under your horse just like I was, you remember, when he took his own good time about helping me from under that cherry tree. So he came riding here as hard as you did. It was pretty funny to think of both of you breaking your necks, almost, to put yourselves just where I wanted you."

"I don't believe he's here. Not for a minute."

His smirk was malicious.

She had a sudden flurry of fear for Neith.

"You've not hurt Neith?" she asked fiercely.

"Mendoza slipped behind him and stunned him enough for peaceable capture; he came to in short order. Headache undoubtedly. Nothing worse."

"It's incredible," she said in helpless fury.

He laughed, harsh dry laughter.

"I was in Europe three years during the late unpleasantness. A tenth of what I saw

would have taught you what life really is, but to you it's—bah, why talk about it. Here's the milk in the cocoanut. I'm offering you Neith's existence in exchange for your marrying me in a civil quiet manner. No fuss!"

"You'd not dare—hurt him!"

"Neith's extinction would take no daring. This cabin's built over a fissure, which is concealed by loose flooring. If you choose, it'll be this way: I have witnesses who say they saw Neith drop some small thing he valued through a floor crack. The boards were taken up to recover it. While peering through the opening, he leaned too far and went head down into what's called a bottomless pit. No recovery of the body would be possible. It'd all be very convenient. Nobody could be accused of anything ugly."

"D'you think I'd stay silent?" she cried.

"Having refused to marry me here, you'd be down in the Mexican barrancas, where," he added with sudden savagery, "I'd teach you to come to heel and be glad of marriage. And that," he changed to mocking silkiness, "would also be your own fault."

LYRIA'S distrust of him showed in her contemptuous tone. "Unless I see Neith for myself, I won't believe you."

"I humor all your whims, darling. We'll see him right now. He's in the next room."

Getting up, they both went into the room. Neith was sitting on a short oak settle which was nailed to the floor. He was smoking. The steel cuffs on his wrists were connected by a light chain which left his hands reasonably free. One cuff, the right, had a ring. Through the ring ran a trace chain which was heavily stapled into the wall.

Neith's feet were free and he rose instantly as Lyria came in. He smiled at her so brightly that for a second she had the feeling, a confused feeling, that the whole matter was some kind of stupid joke.

"I understood you were here," Neith said. "Cigarette?"

She shook her head. "No, thanks."

She saw his brilliant eyes turn on Whit, saw the steady, contemptuous fire in them.

She looked at Whit and winced at the hatred which showed plainly in his face. It burned in his jaw muscles as he stared back at Neith until his features were contorted into a mask of malice. Then traces of the emotion vanished as Whit regained control of himself.

Whit slowly lighted a cigarette. When he spoke, there was a feline ease in his voice.

"You'll be saved the boredom of repetition, Lyria. All I've told you, I told him. Now it rests with you, darling, whether you care to save the life of a man who saved you from being horned to death by Caliban. Isn't gratitude from you rather a requirement?"

As if she needed that! She would die for Neith if dying would save him, but her death would leave Whit nothing to gratify but hate, and he would gratify it.

"Lyria, you know my estimate of this fox-brained scoundrel—cunning, dangerous," Neith interposed quickly. "You owe me nothing for snubbing Caliban. I'd have done the same thing for any human situated as you were. Whether Whit does or doesn't murder me is between Whit and myself. But get this straight—your marrying him won't save me. He'll never keep his word."

Whit caught up his quirt. Lyria flashed in front of him, seized the quirt near the butt, and he yielded it to her.

"He's telling a pretty, romantic lie to save your feelings, Lyria," Whit said with a sneer. "I will keep my word—either way." His tone became harsh. "No more stalling, Lyria! Is Neith for it? Do I take you down into the barrancas? Or will you marry me with no hysterics? Make your decision—this is the showdown."

She looked steadily at Whit and now she could see cold sweat glistening on his forehead. She also saw him wipe it away. At last she really understood him. Those beads didn't spring from fear of the law, but from terror about his possible failure to get what he had called the power and glory of gold. In his striving for this goal, words like cruelty and lawlessness simply meant nothing to him.

One word remained fixed in her mind and every moment assumed greater importance—*delay*.

To drag this matter out before the last minute showdown came, that might mean an unexpected chance. Not that she could foresee any chance. But soldiers—how often she'd read that they'd fought a delaying action. It might bear no fruit, but if that were so, she would marry Whit "with no fuss." She would do it prettily, so prettily that she would send Neith back, safe, to Robina.

Lyria glanced at Whit.

"I've been thrown from one shock to another," she said. "I can't decide until my

mind has a little time to clear. Give me an hour to think this over."

"More stalling," he cut in brutally. "I'll give you just five minutes." He wheeled toward the hall door. "Now what's up?"

CHAPTER IX

Desperate Ruses

SQUEAKINGLY a key had turned in the hall door lock. Mendoza, looking unhappy, stood in the entrance of the room. He spoke to Whit in Spanish.

"Señor, *he* is at the barn!"

Whit swore in the same language.

"Didn't he get my message not to come tonight?" Whit asked.

Mendoza shrugged. "Señor, yes. But he is of an arrogance, saying who in the name of El Diablo are you that you should, for your caprice, upset the arrangements made between you. I with difficulty induced him to wait at the barn. If you see him immediately, señor, you can soon send him on his way. He brings your share of dinero from the wet cattle, señor. Do not forget that. And he has a word of—"

"I'll have to see him," Whit interrupted savagely. "Keep guard here, Mendoza."

Lyria's Spanish was as good as Whit's, but she had worn a puzzled and sulky expression as they talked—the air of one offended by the swift change to an incomprehensible tongue.

Whit turned at the door.

"Did I leave the handcuff key with you?" he asked.

Mendoza smiled. "It is safe in the inside treasure pocket of my jacket, señor."

Whit had the air of a man desperately annoyed with the details clustering in his mind. He ripped out another curse.

"How dared he come here after he got my order to keep away."

"Señor, of you two, each one thinks himself the grand boss," Mendoza said coolly. "Better hurry, señor, or he will come to the house."

Whit looked at Lyria, "If you want anything, ask Mendoza in Spanish, he has very little English."

Lyria thought swiftly, He's trying to find out if I know what they've been saying.

"Don't be stupid," she answered. "I don't know Spanish."

She thought, If I can delay Whit here maybe that man at the barn will come and then I might get help.

"Whit, listen to me," she said hastily. "All you've been saying requires turning over in my mind."

Mendoza moved up to Whit, gently took him by the arm and as gently thrust him out of the room into the hall, closed the door after him and locked it. He hung the clumsy rusty key on a nail above the door, evidently he wasn't going to have it in his beautiful velvet jacket.

Staring at him, watching the action of his fingers as he dusted a speck of rust from the velvet, she noted mechanically that one of the handmade and quite splendid silver buttons on the jacket was hanging loose.

Mendoza came toward the fireplace. He wiped oil and rust from his fingers with the air of an ermine whose coat has been muddied.

"Thees key she ees a bad object! Not used so longa time."

Lyria, who had heard Whit hurry away from the house, wasted no precious seconds. She went straight into a desperate attempt to bribe Mendoza. Neith interrupted her.

"Let me talk, Lyria," he said. For their escape he offered Mendoza everything he had, a bank account of ten thousand dollars, his ranch—and immunity. For both or for the escape of Lyria alone.

He had scarcely finished when Mendoza was shaking his head and smiling.

"There are many reasons why I no accep' señor."

Passionately Lyria began her offer again. Mendoza stopped her at once.

"Do not waste your sweet voice on thees bribe stuff—eet es no good to me. I tell you frank, firs', I am partner weeth Whit, in what comes weeth his heir. Second, Whit would keel me. Come now, senorita! Sit by me on thees couch weeth these fat cushions and I weel sing to you a song of thees lofe."

SHE didn't answer. In a very hard school she was learning fast to estimate men. This man couldn't be bribed. Heart and soul he belonged to Whit who knew how safely he could trust Mendoza. The knowledge caused her heart to sink. One of Mendoza's sentences lingered with her.

"Do not waste your voice."

Do not waste the seconds—the precious seconds—while Whit is gone. Something could be done. Something must be done. Don't look at Neith, you fool, don't think of Neith. Think of this man Mendoza—Whit's man. Whit's tool, owned by Whit. Look at Mendoza.

How can you approach him, interest him, how can you flatter him? What shall you praise? His fancy clothes, his velvet jacket with its silver buttons, with its inside pocket that has the handcuff key? There is a loose silver button. Sewing! Dolores has a work basket on the table. Scissors! I could fight with scissors.

She moved to the sewing basket, her fingers played in it. Mendoza grinned. There were no scissors! Lyria smiled at him, from a surface self that obeyed the desperate self below.

"Señor Whit is lucky to have any one so loyal."

"The senorita she ees kind to remark eet."

"I suppose I shall have to agree with what he wants," she said doubtfully as though seeking counsel of Mendoza.

"Why not, senorita? Thees lofe eet is the same weeth one hombre or another."

Mendoza offered her a cigarette. She shook her head in refusal but managed to smile at him. Mendoza put it to his lips and lighted it. Through the incident the flying seconds stabbed at Lyria. Her gaze roved everywhere, always coming back to Mendoza.

"You were kind about the cigarette," she said quietly. "In return, Mendoza, I'll sew on tightly that beautiful silver button that's nearly off your jacket."

She picked up the sewing basket, went to the couch "weeth thees fat cushions" and sat down. Immediately he came and sat beside her, watching her fingers exploring the tumbled contents, spools of various colored silk or cotton threads, a card with needles, darning balls, a thimble.

"I am glad there are no scissors," Mendoza said amiably. "I put them away, senorita. I weel bite off thees threads for you."

She smiled at him. "Surely you didn't imagine I'd stick you with the scissors?"

"Quien sabe, senorita. Ver' ungrateful womans did steek me once—ugly womans. Mad cause I kees her once but never no more."

"Give me your jacket."

Smilingly he slipped out of the gay jacket, then with a roguish glance at her he took the handcuff key from the deep inside breast pocket and slipped its ring on one of his fingers.

"The senorita perhaps hoped I would leave thees key in thees jacket?"

She hung her head. He patted her shoulder consolingly. She raised her head.

"If I had any such hopes, Mendoza, they are dead now." She looked at him sadly. Her lips quivered. "While I sew the button on tightly, sing me a verse to steady my brain. I am distracted, Mendoza. I hate Whit—and I know I'll have to marry him."

Mendoza took off his wrist watch.

"I weel sing to you of thees lofe, senorita!" He slipped the keyring on the watch band, refastened the band, picked up his guitar and sang, his song arguing that love, like gold, is where you find it and should not be confined to merely one pair of lips.

He had a good voice and enjoyed his own singing, while Lyria worked deftly at the big silver button, the little work basket in her lap.

"You sing beautifully, Mendoza, but now here is your jacket." He set down the guitar and she held the jacket for him as he slipped it on. Behind narrowing lids, Neith watched silently.

MENDOZA took off his wrist watch, removed the key ring from the watch band, slipped the ring on his finger as he refastened the watchband.

He sat on the right of Lyria. He moved close to her and prisoned her right hand in his.

"So you weel not try to grab thees key, senorita." His face was flushing as the warm yielding youth in her fingers touched him.

He thrust his right hand across his broad chest, and under the left breast of his velvet jacket dropped the handcuff key into the deep inside pocket. This done his gaze fell, above the pocket, on Lyria's lifted smiling face, on slightly parted, warm red lips. He sat fascinated but struggling valiantly against the impulse to snatch her into his arms.

She was the loveliest creature he had ever seen and her charm reached out to him in a devastating way. It is much to the credit of Mendoza's will power that he sprang up, tore his hand from hers rushed to the fireplace and stood kicking the andirons ferociously.

Suddenly he heard a sharp exclamation from Lyria.

"Oh!" she said.

He turned, quickly and sullenly, then forgot his own struggle in astonishment over her eager illumined face. Her figure was rigid as if she were engaged excitedly in listening to something. She ran to the window. She did not seem conscious of Mendoza. He heard an apparently involuntary cry from her.

"Thank heaven! Help at last!"

Far from thanking heaven himself, Mendoza rushed to the window. What had she heard that he hadn't heard during his too fierce, obliterating thoughts of her?

Color high in her face she was staring at the thick willows masking the creek which ran in back of the south side of the barn.

Willows! Mendoza knew, as most lawless men did, that while this growth may help outlaws at times, it is also at times a grand place to shield the approaching law! Was there or wasn't there something moving in those thick green ranks? This was no time for uncertainties. If he, Mendoza, were caught by a posse now, he mightn't even reach a trial. He must get to Whit and the dealer in wet cattle.

Knowing no knife could cut Neith loose, no file act on the steel except through hours of hard work, certain that Lyria wouldn't leave him, Mendoza loosening his guns, unlocked the door, fastened it again and rushed out of the house.

He skirted the barn, where he heard a sharp altercation going on, crossed the creek, and went down toward the willows, cutting across for sign. He found nothing to alarm him.

Certain that nothing could enter the willows on that side without leaving some trace, he pushed boldly into the resistive green thickets. He came out safely on the other side, cut for sign again—this was the house side—and discovered no indication of the approach of the law.

Mendoza sighed with relief. Lyria had been terrified, she had always been protected, and she had thought she heard help because she couldn't believe it wouldn't arrive.

He dashed for the house, lightfooted as a goat in spite of his weight, sure that Lyria would be there with the prisoner. Undoubtedly she really believed she had found a prince in this Neith, but he Mendoza could win her if he were given a little time. He didn't consider Whit skilled in the art of love.

He ran into the house. Lyria should pay for her imagination with a kiss.

As he expected, Mendoza saw her. Then his consciousness went out in a blaze of fireworks.

CHAPTER X

Justice

NEITH NELSON, free of his handcuffs, hurried to Mendoza, who lay on his face, turned him over and got his cartridge belt and guns, buckling them on. He felt Mendoza's heart.

"Yes, he's alive, Lyria. Just knocked out for maybe a couple of hours. See any one leaving the barn?"

Lyria answered from her window watching post.

"Man galloping off on horseback. Must be the one who arrived unexpectedly." Her voice was level but her eyes blazed with excitement.

Neith came to her quickly, balancing one of the guns in his hands and liking the weapon.

"Lyria, don't try to follow. I'm getting down to the barn, to settle with Whit. I don't want him up here."

"Neith, I'm coming, too."

"And have that snake grab you in the barn and use you for a shield while he shoots at me? Indeed not! Stay here and watch. If Whit leaves the barn, slip out the back and into the woods. Leave me a clear field, whether it's here or at the barn. I'll get him."

"How do you know you will? Don't leave me! We've time to escape him—out the back, into the woods. Don't leave me. In everything bad he is clever, he is quick, he can't be beaten. He—"

These thoughts took her by the throat but she stood watching, seemingly cool, as he left the house. She had been able to get the handcuff key because she had secretly found in Dolores' work basket what she had expected to find, woman's universal solvent for ripping old seams and cutting old corns—a discarded razor blade.

With this she had adroitly cut open the bottom of the deep jacket pocket, so that when Mendoza, his thoughts on her disturbing lips, had dropped the key into it the bit

of steel had gone through the open bottom and had slipped between the cushions, the fat cushions, on the couch. Lyria had even widened a crevice there for it. From thence she had salvaged it, the second Mendoza rushed out to search the willows.

But now, heaven help her, she was of no use.

He was walking to his death and why? Money? Life had used old Warringer's fortune to set a fearful trap for Neith. If there were no riches in the world she thought, her mind turning like a fear driven wheel of ideas, there would be no murder. Money! It became in her frantic thoughts a great golden octopus whose tentacles reached out, seized and destroyed. Whit would kill Neith!

Lyria tried not to think, tried to hold her mind in cold watchfulness. Tried to tell her herself that she knew intuitively that Neith would come out of the fight whole and sound. But her whirling, agonized mind would not obey. It bolted, as the chestnut had done, its mechanism running without a governor. Terror for Neith destroyed her mental self control, although she was still able to see that she must wait for the outcome here in the house. . . if she obeyed Neith's stern orders.

Now she heard Neith's splendid and contemptuous baritone call out, as he paused.

"Whit come out! Come shooting!"

But there was no sign of Whit.

Neith moved forward again.

She thought, Neith will keep on going forward. Whit will let him come into the barn and then will shoot.

Suddenly, heedless of Neith's orders, deep in her subconscious mind, she heard a voice. "What are you doing here, so far from him?" it cried poignantly to her.

And instantly it seemed to her that she left the house and walked beside him, moving in the same deliberate way that he moved.

It seemed to her she was aware that one self still stood at the window, watching stupidly, but she accepted this with indifference because her true self walked beside the man she loved.

SHE knew that he had no consciousness that she was there, and she accepted this as best for him, for she must not distract his mind from the immediate peril he approached.

Fear had left her because she was with him, and having no fear, only acceptance of life, she had confidence in life. No longer did any horror remain in the dark shadows of the barn.

The alleyway door was open. Neith went into the barn and again he called to Whit, and again Whit did not answer, he lying in ambush there among the many hiding places that the barn afforded.

She felt the steely, cold courage of Neith flowing toward her. It seemed to her it blew against her temples cooling them, and blew into her heart and became a salient part of her.

His unawareness of her continued to seem best to her. If there came a time when she could be of service to him she would know what to do.

They moved on. The deadly mockery of Whit's silence lay over the whole place. It was the muteness of Death getting ready to take his own, and yet she was not frightened for either Neith or herself. She knew now that he and she belonged to Life, that Life enfolded them. She had quite forgotten Robina. She had forgotten everything except

[*Turn page*]

Can't Keep Grandma In Her Chair

She's as Lively as a Youngster—Now her Backache is better

Many sufferers relieve nagging backache quickly, once they discover that the real cause of their trouble may be tired kidneys.

The kidneys are Nature's chief way of taking the excess acids and waste out of the blood. They help most people pass about 3 pints a day.

When disorder of kidney function permits poisonous matter to remain in your blood, it may cause nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness. Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning sometimes shows there is something wrong with your kidneys or bladder.

Don't wait! Ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, a stimulant diuretic, used successfully by millions for over 40 years. Doan's give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from your blood. Get Doan's Pills.

(Adv.)

what lived and moved in the barn. All the issues were joined here, and she might yet have a part in them.

The guns abruptly blazed. No harm came of it. She had not expected any harm, but she knew the men had shifted their ground. Horses snorted and reared in the stalls, frightened by the gun roar, hating the acrid powder smells. A barn owl blundered past her.

But now danger came and—he wasn't aware of it. Neith would be shot in the back. Whit had moved around noiselessly behind him.

With all the electric, potent force she could summon, her mind shouted a warning to the mind of Neith.

He sprang aside.

His gun thundered twice!

Neith Nelson came again into the house.

The figure at the window turned at the sound of his step, moved toward him, stopped.

"Whit is dead, Lyria," he said quietly.

"Yes, I know," she said, as quietly as he had spoken.

He looked surprised.

"You mean you had such confidence in my shooting you were sure of the outcome?" he said. "But Lyria, he nearly got me."

"I know!"

He stared. "You didn't leave the house?"

"One of me was at the window and stayed there. But my real self was with you."

He looked at her with anxiety. She answered his look.

"Neith, when he was slipping from behind that bin corner, every bit of strength in my real self screamed to you—and you jumped aside just as he pulled trigger. Don't you remember hearing me, Neith?"

"Gosh!" he muttered. "That's queer. It certainly was like a voice when I sprang aside, but there was no sound of one. It was the instinct that comes to you when you are fighting, Lyria."

NEITHER she nor Neith had ever heard of the Rhine experiments, nor certain East Indian beliefs, but if they had, such knowledge would have meant nothing to either of them. He could not believe what she had told him, any more than she could disbelieve it.

What difference did it make? Now that he was safe, he became again Robina's man. A deep weariness descended on Lyria and all the high confidence which she had felt in life such a little while ago dissipated into thin air.

* * * * *

That rather news-starved sheet, Carrabas' semi-weekly *Golden Eagle* got real break in the story of Lyria's abduction by a bolting horse with all its exciting consequences.

The *Golden Eagle's* only regret was the recovery and disappearance of Mendoza who, in the *Eagle's* opinion, should have been strung up right there. But the victors in the affair were glad that the amiable scoundrel had vanished, for in the matter of knockouts he and Neith were even.

Bill Darnel, with redheaded craft, invited the man he wanted for son-in-law out to his ranch for a midnight supper with himself and Lyria, for Bill was blissfully unaware of the Robina Vane angle.

Through supper Bill engaged the rodeo star in ranch talk and found all that Neith said satisfactory; refreshments disposed of, Bill got them both out on the broad moon drenched piazza and then made a barefaced excuse for going back into the house.

Left along with Neith, Lyria stood by the railing and looked out on an argent world, star-canopied—a most lovely world. But she wasn't conscious of its loveliness. She was only overwhelmingly aware of Neith Nelson who now stood close beside her. The flow of his magnetism toward her, the fighting of her self respect and pride against it, tore her soul apart. But she could not stir. Something in her clung fiercely to the tormenting sweetness of these last few minutes with him—Robina's man.

"My mother had a cameo brooch," Neith said slowly. "There was a girl's head on it, in profile, hard and cold and lovely. That is how your face looks tonight against the moonlight."

She didn't answer. Nor move.

He grew indignant. "The first sight I had of you, you looked at me from the sidewalk while the parade was on—and you seemed so human. So—so radiant. So lovable!"

She thought, They are like that, all these riders. They must want every girl in love with them. Robina's not here, so he doesn't miss a chance to use the line he uses on any girl that doesn't fall for him at once. Oh, this is worse than if I was alone. I want to be cheap, for I want to go into his arms.

"You don't speak," Neith went on. "You're really hateful tonight. After all we've been

through! But I was just something casual. You could even be insulting when I suggested you pretend to be engaged to me, as if such a temporary protection were a disgrace to you."

"I can imagine what Robina would have said to me when she found I was borrowing her man," she answered in a steady voice.

"For heaven's sake! Where'd you get the idea I belong to her?"

"Your feeling for her is so deep, so romantic, that I saw you kissing her hand as though you were a knight of old days," Lyria retorted.

He stared in what seemed blank amazement. Then he smiled.

"And from her hand I progressed to her lips?" he asked drily.

Lyria, in desperation, wanted to escape, to force a good-night.

"So I suppose," she said faintly.

"Suppose?"

She flushed scarlet. "I—I shouldn't have watched as long as I did. As soon as you lifted her hand to your lips, I turned away."

He looked at her strangely.

"Where was this touching scene you saw?"

Her gaze fell. Shame was burning her. She told him what had happened, leaving the inference that she had blundered into their tryst's area.

CHAPTER XI

Girl of His Heart

WHEN Lyria had finished speaking, Neith stirred slightly, and folded his arms, looking distinguished and remote there in the silver moonlight.

"Robina is a cattle detective. That's why one of the rustlers who saw her coming, moved the warning post at the quick sand," he drawled.

Lyria's eyes widened in astonishment.

"Cattle detective?"

"Yes. And a mighty good one. She's hired by the Cattle Association."

Lyria shrugged. "When she marries, how will she find time to cook and keep house for you?"

He stared at her, then grinned.

"She's already married!"

Lyria paled. Secretly married to her—already? She resolutely lifted a brave face to Neith. "My best wishes that you'll both continue to be happy."

"She's been married five years," he said curtly. "Her husband is in the Army of Occupation."

Then Neith was in love with a married woman. No wonder they had met secretly. She kept a bitter silence, wanting to leave him now, yet held there by the tormenting delight of his presence.

"When you thought Robina and I met for love, we met in concealment because we were both hoping to unmask and capture a rustler robbing us both. When I lifted her palm to my face it was to sniff at a bit of rag lying there. If that rag smelled of turpentine it was part of some concrete evidence against this man. The scent was there all right, though it was very faint."

Lyria's heart leaped. "Oh, Neith! Is that true?"

"Robina," he insisted, "had the devoted attention of my nose, not my lips. We were deep in cattle thief evidence, not love. We like but we don't love each other. Maybe you saw me put that ring on her finger. She'd asked me to get it fixed for her, the setting was loose. Bill Vane sent it to her."

With what golden splendor the drab world of former loneliness was suddenly filled. It dazzled Lyria. And she had never heard music as wildly thrilling as the truth that rang in every word he had said.

She feared to move or speak, she was lost in passionate listening.

"Robina's man," he repeated in deep exasperation. "How quick you were to believe that! You know in the first sight I had of you I was fool enough to say to myself—she is for me. We were made for each other!"

Now she turned, the cold loveliness of her face flushing with rose color, her eyes were wide with joy and liquid with unshed tears of delight, her lips, moist and red with youth, parted slightly and her young throat throbbed with rising heart beats. Without words her face, so near his now, gave him the full and exquisite promise of her love. Eagerly he caught her into his arms, crushing her hard against his chest, murmuring her name as though it were music.

"Lyria—Lyria!" . . .

Rodeo's end—the last performance. Under brilliant lights the big audience sat hugging to itself every thrill from the exciting show going on in the arena. These spectators were

building memories to carry back home and talk over many a time.

Above a great silver moon swung up a cloudless sky. In the arena the favorite star, Neith Nelson, was winning applause and few regretted Whit's death.

One man did regret it—the arena director. He was outraged that one of his riders should have proved to be what Whit had been. He wanted this memory lost in something new and beautiful which would finish tonight's show.

He had to wrestle with Lyria for her consent. Neith would agree if she consented, and finally she did, so when the program was over the crowd still remained as it had been asked to do, happily curious as to what would happen now.

INTO the arena flashed all the rodeo's masculine riders. Here and there they galloped—looking—looking for something lost. They wheeled they turned, they searched and as they rode swiftly here and there, silver bit chains jangling musically, polished spurs catching the bright light rays, it seemed they must sometimes collide but they never did.

And as they rode, to the music's lowered accompaniment, they sang . . .

"If hearts are valiant, warmly true,
Though Love's sweet goal may seem denied
Love's self shall see each brave heart through,
Love's self shall be the guard and guide!"

Then as though accidentally the mass of riders divided, a lane opened, and into it galloped a girl who rode superbly, a girl on an ebony, glistening horse with a gold studded bridle, a yellow saddle blanket with gold stars. She sat a Western saddle but the horn's top flashed Western gold and the stirrups into which her shining boots were thrust glittered and gleamed with gold.

Against the glossy black of her fine horse she wore a forest suit of white buckskin. Navajo silver ornaments that she wore threw back the light, and Western turquoise made a blue star on her shoulder.

The eager spectators uttered a sigh of pleasure over the beauty of her face. Many recognized her. There was a salvo of handclapping. She flushed and smiled, the light rays catching in the silk of her hair. But she rode fast now and after her came the star the watchers hadn't been able to find before among the riders—Neith Nelson—now in pursuit of Lyria.

Instantly the lane resolved itself into a throng of riders turning and galloping here and there, with the girl flashing among them, through them. In all of it was rhythm, keyed by the changing music—and again the song as she eluded this one and that.

Then like magic the lane had formed again. Neith and a demure and passive Lyria rode side by side to the head of it, and from the announcer's post, grave and clear, came a man's voice, introducing an invisible minister.

Then came a second voice asking:

"Do you, Neith Nelson, take this woman Lyria Darnel for your wedded wife?"

"I do!"

"And you, Lyria Darnel, take this man, Neith Nelson, for your wedded husband?"

She answered, trembling with wonder and with pride:

"I do!"

The voice declared them man and wife. They wheeled their horses to ride away through the isle of riders, and as they did so polished guns flashed out and, held high, crossed and made a series of arches over their heads as they paced down the lane—guns which had made and held the West—guns which were stern guardian angels to protect each man's hearth, home and love.

●

COMING NEXT ISSUE

HEARTS CONTENDING

Another Exciting Complete Novel of the Arena

By CLINTON DANGERFIELD

PLUS MANY OTHER ACTION STORIES—AND SPECIAL FEATURES!

He trotted toward the stands where Jo waited

Queen of the Circle Diamond

By HAROLD F. CRUICKSHANK

When her sweetheart didn't return home, a stranger brought new romance to Jo Daly, and with him came a mystery!

JO DALY leaned against the bole of a stately spruce tree, watching the performance going on in the home yard of the little foothills J-Slash-D outfit.

Her Uncle Nat Daly was wrangling a string of brush-cutting wild stock fresh out of the hills and Jo could see by the pained expression in Nat's face that he was taking a lot more punishment than he could bear, as a Roman-nosed paint horse exploded with atomic violence.

Jo tossed rich red-gold hair from her face and bit sharply at her under lip. This was no job for old Nat. Anything could happen with any one of these hellion squealers . . . Yet Nat was contracted to supply strings of

such bucking critters to circuit stampede and rodeo officials. And, while it wasn't his job to gentle them, there was a clause in the contract which specified that they must be "broken to saddle."

Many times Jo had forked a twister in an effort to help out . . . More than once she had been piled. This evening, Nat had caught her riding, against his caution not to. Nat Daly loved his niece dearly. He had told her that so long as she agreed to tend her garden and her pretty self and cook, that was all he expected of her. They were great pardners and Nat feared for her safety when she topped an end-swapping, four-hoofed, cyclone such as came out of their hills bands.

It didn't matter to him, that when circuit rodeos permitted events for cowgirls, Jo had captured many open events. She was a splendid rider. Nat wanted her, as he said, "in one lovely piece, not scattered all over the foothills, to ha'nt him for the rest of his life."

"One day, kitten, Jim Carter, yore boy'll come back. He'll come gallywhoopin' up the out-trail an' I want him to find you as he left you—the loveliest little filly in all the foothills, instead uh limpin', all scarred up, like me . . . , " he had said to her.

Jo could not get too angry with her Uncle Nat. She was all he had in the world. He had looked after her since the death of her parents, which had occurred within a year of each other. Jo was lovely and Nat wanted her to stay as lovely as she was.

The boy he spoke of so continuously was Jim Carter, a young maverick who had come to the foothills sector as a youngster. Dean Daly, Jo's father, and Nat had cared for him, putting him through school, teaching him to ride. Jim had gone a long way as a contest rider, as a junior and in the open events.

But Jim Carter had been posted missing in action, after the Hong Kong invasion. Jo had privately received the news and since had heard no further word. Not even Nat knew the boy was missing.

Jo watched her uncle stiffly climb down from the lathered paint horse. He was going to cut out another. He was getting too old for this sort of work, but suitable help was scarce and Nat was determined to fulfill his contracts.

She turned away and strode slowly along an old stock trail which brought her to a small stoned-in spring, fringed on three sides by weeping willows. Near-by stood a stout alder on whose bole was carved a strange sign—a circle with a crown in the center. The circle was flanked by two initials—J and J—her initials and Jim's.

Sadly the girl took a seat on the flat rock nearest the alder. She had never known exactly what Jim had meant by that sign. Most youngsters carved hearts and arrows with the initials. And now she wondered if she would ever know . . . Would Jim ever be able to tell her? In her heart she felt that someday he would. She thought it strange that no further word had come from or about Jim . . . It seemed so unreasonable, and yet—she shuddered—news of the treatment of war prisoners by their Jap captors had reached her. They were gruesome tales indeed.

JO IDLY tapped her riding boots with her quirt, when suddenly she started and swung about.

Out of the creeping shades of soft twilight had come a call—a call from Nat Daly.

Jo leaped to her feet and attempted to break into a run, but her knees almost buckled. Nat's voice had scarcely been audible . . .

She found old Nat down, dragging a leg in an attempt to reach the house. Sobbing brokenly, the girl stooped and slipped her arm under his shoulders. Somehow she dragged him to the verandah and inside. She got him to his bed, where he slipped into unconsciousness.

"Nat—Nat—darling . . . "

Nat's eyes had opened. Jo raised his head with one arm and offered him water, which feebly he was able to take.

"It was the wall-eye, honey," he said. "I thought he was clear when I flicked him wit' the hackamore, but he blasted an'—uh—one barrel caught me in the stomach; the other in the laig. . . . Better you ride out an' tote ol' Doc Hildebrant in, sweet. . . . He—"

Jo squeezed his hand warmly. She got to her feet and turned to the kitchen. The stove still had fire in it, and the coffee pot was warm. She restoked the fire and shoved the coffee on to warm, then hurried out to saddle up Cookie, a five-year-old black mare Jim Carter had gentled for her as a two-year-old.

Hitching Cookie to a rail outside the house, Jo went indoors and gave Nat some stimulating coffee. It revived him, but he was unable to drink a full cup.

Jo fixed him as comfortably as she could,

and kissed his seamy, pale face.

Her eyes were wet as she mounted Cookie, a spirited mare with an inclination always to begin a ride with a set of preliminary, mischievous bucking maneuvers. But Jo was in no state of mind for such preliminaries this evening. She laid on a touch of quirt and Cookie broke into a headlong gallop.

Jo gave her her head until she ran out of desire to break both their necks. Cookie settled down to an easy lope along the beautiful trail which would come in on the Macleod highway.

Jo found Doc Hildebrant five miles from town on an emergency maternity case. Almost through with the delivery, he told Jo to stand by. There was a neighbor woman to take over and care for the new mother and the infant.

Doc didn't keep her waiting long. He hugged Jo warmly. Doc was a great friend of the Daly's, especially of Nat and Jo. He was the sort of doctor who still rode the back trails, visiting old timers and their kindred in the isolated farmsteads and ranches.

He rode close to Jo's side now, and when the horses had settled to a walk, Doc patted the girl's arm.

"So the ol' coyote got himself all busted up at last, eh, Jo dear? We've been looking for this for some time. But don't you worry too much. We'll look after him. We'll do everything that can be done . . . By the way, mebbe I shouldn't spring this on you so suddenly, but in town the other evening, I heard one of the waitresses at my favorite eating place, telling someone that someone had told her of hearing Jim Carter'd been seen."

"Jim—Jim—Carter! Doc, there must be some mistake. Why, it's—it's incredible! Jim would have—"

"I know . . . I know, honey. Mebbe the girls were just guilty of wishful thinkin'. Reckon you'd have been the first to hear from Jim . . . But keep hopin' . . . Boys have turned up when all seemed lost. They've got the Japs all dusted off in good style, and it shouldn't be long before—uh—"

Doc coughed sharply and proceeded to cut himself a light sliver of eating tobacco. The girl at his side had sobbed, a plaintive little cry which had touched the old medico in a soft spot. He and Nat had discussed at some length plans for the future of Jo and Jim. Doc was familiar with the quarrels of the two youngsters, and the patching up of differences. Doc reached over and again patted Jo's arm.

"Let's forget about the rumor, honey. Let's keep smilin' and hopin'. When Jim gets back, you'll hear about it . . . He'll come tearin' up to you like a wild colt . . . If he gets back, and doesn't come—I'll hunt him up an' quirt him all the way up to the J-Slash . . . "

Doc's horse stumbled and like lightning Jo's hand shot out to steady her friend.

"Thanks, Jo dear. Reckon I'd better watch my ridin' and quit moonin' like an ol' midwife, or you'll have both Nat and me on your hands."

They reached the J/D and Doc went swiftly indoors, while Jo took care of the horses. But Doc was quickly at the stoop again.

"Better unsaddle my crowbait," he called. "I'll be stayin' the night, honey!"

Jo started, a hand flying to her breast. Doc had already found something seriously wrong with Nat.

For a long moment she sat on a tack box in the stable, the tears coursing freely down her lovely cheeks. Jim Carter seemed lost to her, and now—Nat—her "pard."

JO DALY winced with pain as a little bay wildling flung himself into a set of gyrations calculated to shake the teeth from her jaws. Her back ached fiercely. This evening she had forked three of the wild string. Twice she'd been piled and on one occasion had narrowly missed cracking her skull on a rock. Within a short time a shipment of stock was scheduled to be loaded at the nearest stock siding and Jo was determined that they would all be "broken to saddle."

For some time, Nat Daly had been pretty low in the hospital, dangerously so for ten days. But now, according to Doc Hildebrant's latest word, he was mending. Sadly Doc reported he would never recover sufficiently to work again.

Jo was on her own. She had advertised in vain for help. The best that came out of this was a half-breed who had lasted not longer than thirty-six hours.

Now she slid to the ground and jerked the cinch strap loose, flipping the saddle from the latest wild one. She took some comfort in the fact that she had finished off three critters tonight, albeit she confessed without shame, that she had more than once pulled leather. But she didn't mind this sort of cheating. There were heavy hospital ex-

penses to meet.

Jo, in order to meet the extra expenses, intended to cut another string of wild ones from the hills bands. These she hoped to sell to the secondary circuit Rodeo Association. Already Uncle Nat had begun to worry about money matters.

Doc Hildebrant had offered to meet her current expenses with a loan, but Jo had declined.

"Well, it's your own business, honey," Doc had said. "But I feel it'd be better that way, than to have you get hurt wranglin' those wild critters. It would kill ol' Nat if anythin' happened to you, and I'd feel mighty upset myself."

Jo dabbed at her nose with a bandana. She had suffered a bad nosebleed from the latest jolting and felt faint.

As she passed the corral on her way to the house, she conned the arched-backed group of innocent-looking wild ones, now docilely eating alfalfa, and her mouth tightened.

"Deceitful hellions," she swore. "I'd like to butcher the whole bunch of you for fox meat." Her small fists hardened. She was growing hard, bitter. Shrugging, she moved indoors and started a fire in the stove.

Jo was not hungry but a cup of tea and some scraps of food, a meal of any sort, would be companionable. It was while she ate that a knock sounded on her door.

At her call, the door opened to admit a tall young stranger, a blonde young man in riding kit, whose face twisted in a queer little smile, a smile that startled Jo.

"Yes," she breathed.

"Evenin' ma'am . . . I'm—uh—Cal Malone. Heard you needed some help wranglin' a bunch, so I—uh—here I am."

"Sit down, Mr. Malone."

Jo got slowly to her feet. She certainly needed help, but this man was young, good-looking. He would perhaps expect far more wages than she could afford to pay, and besides, he was an utter stranger.

"Any references?" she asked.

He smiled, his mouth twisting into that enigmatic smile again.

"Well—uh, no, ma'am. Canadian government, mebbe. I'm not long out of the army."

"Stranger, aren't you?"

"Yep, hereabouts. Alberta born . . . High River country . . . " He was about to add something but changed his mind.

"What army outfit were you with?" Jo asked.

"The Royal—uh, say, ma'am, is this a board of interrogation, or—well, won't a trial do? I'm honorably discharged. Canuck infantry. Never harmed a girl in my life. I can ride an' would settle for forty a month an' my grub . . . I'm hopin' to build into a little spread of my own up in the hills here. That suit you, ma'am?"

"Y-es . . . Supper?"

"Thanks, ma'am."

"Jo's the name . . . I'm Jo Daly. Jo'll do. Not much chuck left tonight. Some warmed up fried chicken, raspberries and canned milk. That sound enough?"

"Sounds just swell, ma'—Miss Jo. I—I'd like to unsaddle my horse, and wash up a bit."

The girl smiled and nodded.

AS THE stranger ate, Jo tried to pump him for some further information about himself and his army service. He did hint that he'd seen Pacific front service, but checked himself up very quickly on that. He intimated that he'd escaped the Japs and had joined the guerillas on one of the Dutch East Indies' islands, along with a couple of buddies. A destroyer had nosed in to pick him up.

"Touch of fever now and then, Miss Jo," he went on. "Bit of a busted hip. That's why I want to come up here—to sort of get breathin' better. I figured this job of yours wouldn't overwork a man. What's to do?"

Jo outlined the work.

"There'll be haying to wind up, Cal—some alfalfa and wild grass, and I want to cut out another string of wild ones and saddle break them. They're tough ones, but I've ridden some of them out myself. You'll likely get piled, and probably hurt . . . Ever know a man by the name of Carter—Jim Carter?"

"Uh!"

Cal Malone coughed sharply. Jo had sprung the name on him with swift suddenness. He excused himself.

"Piece uh chicken bone got caught up, I reckon," he lied. "Uh—Carter, you said? Might have been a Carter in our outfit. You see we were gathered up in a hurry an' rushed out to Ho—to the east. Mostly we called each other Slats, Fatso, Stinky or anything like that . . . "

He broke off abruptly, and Jo watched him stare strangely out through the west window, out to the far hills which seemed aflame in the glory of the sunset.

"Something bothering you, Cal?" she asked softly.

He started sharply and turned to her.

"N—well, it's the sunset Miss. I have to get used to such things again. It reminds me of a fire that hit us—and that wasn't a bush fire. It came from dirty little Jap flame-throwers. Messed up some of my buddies pretty badly. Uh—now if you'll tell me where I bed down, I'll take my riggin' over. Supper was fine. Thanks."

Jo had debated as to where Malone would be put to stay. There was the old bunkhouse, then there was Nat's room. She decided on Nat's room. Cal Malone had stood up under her testing. He was a returned man. Yes—it would be Uncle Nat's room.

"Mind if I smoke in my room, Miss Jo?" he asked.

"Smoke anyplace you've a mind to, sol—cowboy. If you start a fire, it's you who'll have to put it out. When you get squared away you can join me on the verandah. We'll have a cigarette and I'll give you the dope on this country. There's just one set of rules to remember here on the J-Slash-D. I'm single and I'm not looking for a man. I've got a big job of work to do."

She paused, for that queer little twisted smile had screwed up his mouth again.

"Don't take that too literally," she was quick to add. "I was just giving you the score, sort of laying my cards face up on the table for you. Okay?"

"O-kay, sister . . . Okay."

JO AND Cal Malone worked furiously for the next ten days. Alfalfa and wild hay were stacked. In the evenings they rode, either up into the hills, scouting a new band, or wrangling down at the home yard.

This evening was soft, with a gentle breeze pennanting Jo's riotous hair. They rode silently side-by-side up into the upper levels along a narrow trail. They rode close, and now and then their knees touched. Cal half turned and flashed a soft smile, a twisted smile which, when first he came, had disturbed her.

"This guy, Jim Carter," he said slowly, softly. "He was—the—uh boy friend, huh? Liked him a heap, didn't you?"

Jo nodded and stabbed sharply at her underlip with her teeth.

"We were to have been married, Cal. Uncle Nat had it all planned that Jim and I were to carry on the J-Slash-D in our own way—that is, raising blooded stock, as dad had done, as Jim always wanted that."

They continued in silence, fascinated by the changing lights in the hill country—where imaginary broncs coiled and twisted in whorling shades of gold, plum, rose and wine—shadows taunting, baiting shadows.

Cal slyly watched the girl's face. It was pale this evening, and more lovely than ever.

"Lucky guy, Jim Carter," he breathed softly, but not softly enough. Jo snapped from her reverie.

"What was that you said? I—I was sure you mentioned Jim's name . . . "

"Mebbeso I did, Jo. I've been thinkin' lots about him, an' a lot about you, too . . . " Their horses came to a halt at the crest of a hill. Jo's bosom rose and fell sharply and her eyes were somnolent as she turned to Malone. He kneed his horse in closer and gently touched one of her bare arms.

"Jo—I wish I could—"

Jo quivered. He placed an arm about her shoulders and drew her up close, very close. For a long moment she leaned thus, then slowly lifted her chin invitingly, her eyes glistening with tears, her lips moving like luscious rose petals.

Cal Malone shuddered. His arm tightened about her then suddenly relaxed.

There came a sharp shrill bugle from a level beyond.

Malone swung and Jo settled herself in her saddle.

"That's him, Jo—the stallion you thought I was spoofin' you about!" Cal clipped excitedly. "We'll bring him in. As black as night, he is, an' about four-year-old. He might kill us both, but I've got to get him. You could ask any price you've a mind to, and I'm betting odds there's only one rider this side uh Hong—this side uh Halifax who could ride him out."

Malone heeled his horse and picked him into a hard run, Jo touching up Cookie at the same time.

They raced the stallion for three miles, before they finally got him to turn in with a small band of wild ones.

The black stallion was loath to submit to capture and now and then broke in a bid for freedom, but time and time again, either Jo or Cal, or both of them, managed to haze him back.

There was trouble at the corral. The black one seemed determined to either break down the fence or kill himself.

Dismounted, their horses unsaddled, Jo and Cal stood and watched the lathered wild creature display his rage and defiance. But now Cookie was returning from the water trough. She snuffled softly as she edged up toward the corral, unafraid.

The big black wild creature inched toward her. They touched muzzles through the gap between poles, and the stallion shook his head shrilling a wild scream into the gathering twilight.

Jo blushed as she turned to Cal.

Together they walked to the verandah. She touched his arm, and their eyes met.

"Cal, I'm sorry for my—my exhibition of weakness up there in the hills tonight. I shouldn't have done that to you, when I can't think of anyone else but—Jim."

"It's okay, Jo. I had it all figured out: you were just using me as a stand-in for Jim. But it's okay. Don't let it get you down. Maybe I was some weak myself an' maybe there's someone I think a heap of, too. Now tonight we'd better get some extra sleep because we need a lot of strength when we set out to bust up that hunk of black detonation . . . I—uh—say, Jo, there's a name for the black feller: Detonator!"

"Right! Perfect, Cal. Okay, cowboy, supper in an hour."

They shook hands warmly, and Cal strode back to the corral to toss some extra feed to the stock and do up chores for the night.

JO WAS fixing Cal's room the next afternoon. It was too warm for riding today, until later, in the cool of the evening. Cal had ridden on into town, to post some mail.

As she riffled through discarded rubble and old papers, Jo came across the part of a letter, one that Cal, evidently, had rewritten. She could not help but read Cal's scrawled handwriting.

" . . . and I'm telling you, chum, you'd better be fit and well if you draw this critter Detonator in the finals. He's—" the page was torn off at this point. But there were a few more words farther down, words which startled Jo. A part sentence read: "We'll be seeing you, chum—you and your new kisser. Good luck, and watch for Jo and me. We'll be rooting for you. Your old buddy, Cal."

Jo stood and stared again at the fragments of paper even after she had torn them into several smaller pieces. There was a deep mystery about Cal Malone. There had been from the first time Jo met him. That twisted little smile which she had at first misunderstood. She still couldn't understand why he hadn't kissed her, that night in the hills when her invitation to do so had been so obvious.

Slowly she moved back to her kitchen and burned the scraps of paper and other rubbish.

"So—Mister Malone, you're in league with a big-time rider, eh? We'll be there, rooting for him—you and Jo!"

Jo set about prettying up. She must get down to see Nat. He looked forward so much to her regular, though brief visits. When he heard about the Detonator, his eyes would bug, she knew. Nat worried about his niece constantly.

Jo found him much improved. Nat expected to be home shortly, but Doc Hildebrant had shaken his head when he gave confirmation of this news to Jo, who interpreted this to mean that Nat would, more or less, be a permanent invalid. He had grown very thin, and when he walked along the hospital corridor, as he did each day, he clung to the wall for support, or to Jo, or to a nurse.

It was a cool evening, following a short thunder storm. Jo Daly and Cal Malone smoked and chatted on the verandah. They would be shipping stock tomorrow and hoped to include Detonator in the shipment.

"I've an idea no one will want to pay you what he's worth, Jo," Cal observed, "but I'm thinking, if everything adds up as I figure it will, you'll be wanting the black here. He's got grand blood in his big veins—real breeder stock."

They went indoors, and for the first time since his arrival, Jo showed Cal her room with its trophies, Jim Carter's and hers. He turned to a picture on the north wall.

"Jim—!"

"You know him, Cal, recognize him?"

Cal swallowed hard.

"Seen him around, Jo. Swell-lookin' boy."

"That picture was taken when he won the Canadian at Calgary," Jo informed Cal. "He was just a kid then. Cal—I wonder if—if Jim will ever ride another—" She broke off, biting at her under lip.

Cal shrugged.

"You can't ever tell, Jo . . . Can't ever tell," and his mouth twisted up into that strange little smile as he lowered his glance and half turned away.

"Better bring out your first aid kit now.

It's time to see that Detonator really explode, Jo." Whistling softly, Cal moved out of doors, Jo following shortly afterward, her breast heaving with concern, misgiving.

CAL HAD, at first, planned to have Jo haze for him, but he had changed that plan. It might be too dangerous for her.

He flipped a lass rope over the big one's neck and went skidding across the corral on his boot heels and then the seat of his jeans. Now he called to Jo to hand him a poplar pole, with which he wedged the big one in a corner of the corral, snubbing him down.

First he slipped on a hackamore then paused a long moment before reaching for the saddle.

"Say a little prayer now, sister," Cal called to Jo. "When he feels the kak hit him, he's liable to come unfolded, throwin' dynamite all over."

That is nearly what happened. The Detonator seemed to explode within himself. He went to his knees. His great muscles vibrated with passionate savagery and Cal realized that here was the fightingest wild creature ever to feel the pressure of a cinch.

The man backed away, wiping sweat from his forehead. Jo joined him and caught at his arm.

"Let's forget it, Cal," she said brokenly. "Turn him loose—back into the hills. I—I don't want you to ride him. He might—might kill you, Cal. Perhaps we'd better—"

That twisted little grimace again. Cal shook his head.

"Saddle broke is what the contract calls for, sister. That's what it'll be, but if you'll promise not to spill it to anyone, I'm going to sneak a trick on him, first. I'm going to tie down a loose sack of oats on him, an' let him throw that around a while. Promise?"

Jo crossed her heart, somewhat relieved.

Cal got the oats and secured it in the saddle. He flicked a shank of rope. The big one was free, though on a long rope lead. And then Jo Daly gasped as she saw the great black stallion really detonate. Twice he reared and swerved, and with his great teeth exposed, rushed at Cal, but Malone nimbly leaped out of range of the striking forehoofs.

For upwards of twenty minutes, Cal gave the stallion his play, then suddenly snubbed him down, took away the oat sack and before the big one was scarcely aware of a change, was in the saddle himself.

"Stand by, Jo— Let down those poles—"

The stallion squealed, came up sunfishing, then swapped with a fury that almost had Cal pulling leather in the first two seconds. Jo gasped as she watched the black weave and chop, weave and chop, more after the style of a wild steer, until suddenly his heavily muscled form seemed to explode in all directions in the same instant.

Cal Malone was flung wide. He landed heavily across the let down gate poles. Quickly Jo darted in, half screaming as she whirled her quirt. The big stallion had come charging in, but the girl's frantic action had diverted him. Now Jo helped Cal to the clear.

Later, in the house, he smiled thinly up at the girl whose face was so close, so close to his, as she bathed his forehead with spring water.

"It—it isn't so bad, Jo," he said. "He knocked the wind out of me, and I hurt my old war hip some, but help me up now. I'll make it. . . . " He shuddered as he felt her arms about him.

"Th-anks, pardner. Help me stand. I'll flex up and be okay in a minute. I've got to unsaddle that critter yet . . . "

In a few moments Cal was able to stand under his own power. Jo helped him as he began to walk. Finally, he nodded to her and moved off alone, taking his time, flexing his right leg until at last he waved back to her from the corral. He managed to rope the big black and snub him down, removing the rigging.

"You'll be a sensation at Calgary, feller," Cal said softly. "It won't be so tough down there, saddlin', with helpers an' hazers on the job."

STAMPEDE officials had saved the Detonator for the finals, to which Cal Malone looked forward with quivering interest.

His face brightened as he glimpsed a tall masked rider walking toward him at the end of one of the barns.

"Nice goin' yesterday, chum," Cal called out. "An' how's the new kisser comin'? How much longer you got to be masked up this-a-way . . . You remind me of some masked marvel of a wrassler."

"Might come off tomorrow, Cal," the rider stated. "M.O.'s have been scared of it up to now, afraid the lashes of the right eyelid wouldn't knit in, but they seem to nod to each other on the last examination like it was okay. By the way, there's still nobody

with you . . . You promised to bring her along, Cal . . . "

Cal shook his head.

"Her Uncle Nat got home an' took a bit of a re-lapse, but she was hopin' to get along for the finals. I'm sendin' a wire to her tonight. If ol' Nat's okay again, she'll be here, so you'd better come out of that chute scratchin' and really ridin', brother . . . Don't let us down, buddy."

The masked man smiled and squeezed his friend's arm. He nodded. He had to leave now to ride his final in the Canadian Championship. Tomorrow, he hoped he would come out of the chute in his own identity, and not as the "Masked Rider."

Jo Daly arrived the next morning and checked in at the hotel at which Cal Malone had reserved a room for her. She was sent at once to Cal's room, as he'd left a message for her.

She knocked at his door and at his call, moved in, but chocked up short, startled and shocked. Cal Malone sat on the edge of the bed, his arm about the shoulders of a small, pretty blonde girl.

Jo's eyes narrowed. So this was it! Her lips tightened as she started to back away. But Cal's call arrested her. There was a chuckle in it.

"It's okay an' all legal, Jo, sister. This is my wife, the little Yank nurse who tended my busted hip. Jo, meet Betty, my wife. Betty, meet Jo—Jim—Carter's girl."

Jo started, but Betty Malone came in swiftly and gathered Jo into her arms.

Later, together, they left for the grounds, to watch the North American finals.

Jo watched with half interest a couple of pretty good rides, especially one out of Chute Seven, when a bunched up squealing mass of four-hoofed tumbleweed slashed into a terrific ride. His rider was disqualified. Two more riders came out and scored good points, then the crowd seemed to sense something sensational. The P.A. speaker was booming out the preliminary message now, building the people up. . .

"Ladies and gentlemen. Watch Chute Number Ten—Number Ten. . . Out of Chute Number ten—riding the still unridden outlaw of the foothills, the Detonator, that great rider formerly known as the Masked Rider—Ladies and Gentlemen—out of Chute Number Ten—riding Detonator—Jim—Carter!"

A strange little cry escaped Jo Daly. She half turned and clung to Cal, who slipped an arm tightly about her shoulders.

Cal's eyes were trained on the chutes. The gate swung and out poured the black stallion, the Detonator already hurricaning into his savage bag of tricks. . .

"Jim—" Jo almost screamed the name but her voice was drowned by the roar of the crowd as the stallion flung himself almost inside out.

Jo's eyes misted as she watched that beautiful man form follow in rhythm with the black's swaying. Then she saw Jim's face, but in a flash, it was someone's else's face.

Her heart beating madly, Jo was drawn in sheer fascination to the rider, who scratched and fanned perfectly, despite that mad, twisting mass beneath him. Then suddenly, the whistle. The crowd rose in a mass. Jo was sobbing quietly.

Cal nudged her. Jim Carter was down. The hazers had taken over, and the tall, gangling youth was acknowledging the applause with his waving hat.

But now he turned and broke into a stiff trot toward that section of the stands in which Jo and the Malones stood.

Not five feet from Jo, Jim Carter halted. His lips parted. Jo stared momentarily, amazed. . . Jim's right eye, his right temple, and his ear. They were not the same, but suddenly a little sob of joy shook her and Jim leaped in to gather her into his arms, an act which brought further tumult from the crowd.

"Jim—my own Jim—darling," she called.

THERE was a wedding in the making up at the J-Slash-D.

From a wheel-chair, old Nat did the directing. Doc Hildebrant and the Malones did the active work. It was to be a big barbecue night, when all the settlers for miles around would be present, tomorrow evening. Nat even figured on fiddling for the old time dance himself. Women were coming from the countryside with eats, and menfolk were going to bring along a butchered yearling steer for barbecue.

But tonight, under a soft foothills moon, was Jo and Jim's night. They strode slowly along the lighted path to the spring, which rippled beautifully. Now Jim turned and held Jo closely to him. This was their place, their trysting place—it had been all their lives.

Jo lifted her pale face to Jim's, and her

sweet mouth silently invited his to take possession.

They sat on the great flat slab rock where often in the past they had sat and planned.

In the moonlight, Jo saw the strange eyelashes now more clearly than ever before, in profile. She raised her hand and tenderly stroked the newly-made section of his face. Underneath he was still the old Jim. He loved her far more than she had even anticipated.

"Tell me, darling," she said softly. "Wouldn't they let you write? I would have felt even closer to you, Jim, had I known everything. Were you afraid I'd be scared, scared off?"

"Mebbe, honey. Anyhow, the plastic surgeons weren't quite sure until right near the end. When I heard about Nat, I decided I'd better get Cal to come up and lend a hand. Great pal, Cal, huh?"

"Never was a better one, Jim. I hope he and Betty will stay with us, pardners, when we start ranching our way, don't you, sweet?"

Jim nodded and kissed her.

"They will, Jo dear. Cal's already told me."

JO LOOKED beyond Jim's shoulder to the alder tree.

"Jim, darling, that inscription—your carving there. Just exactly what had you in mind? You never did tell me?"

"Well, Jo, it's like this: I didn't aim to tell you until tomorrow, until after we were married. It's something that Nat and I figured out. . . Simple enough to read. It's to be the new brand for our ranch, yours and mine. Circle-Diamond. Get it?"

"Yes. But the inside, the crown—" Jo persisted.

"That's an easy one too, honey. That. . ." Jim hugged her warmly, "is you—crown meaning queen. Queen of the Circle-Diamond. . . Like it, or does it sound droopy?"

"It sounds—beautiful, Jim—as beautiful as this perfect night, our night. It all makes my life just perfect Jim, darling."

Jo slid easily, freely into his arms.

Next Issue's Featured Attractions

RODEO star Lance Durret made a tremendous impression on ranch girl Natalie Rodell—so much so that she fell madly in love with him. But her path to romance wasn't all clear sailing, especially when her affection for Lance aroused the jealousy and enmity of his rivals in HEARTS CONTENDING, next issue's novel by Clinton Dangerfield which is packed with breath-taking rodeo action!

OUT OF the rodeo because of his injuries, old Jack Summers was pretty glum—but suddenly things looked brighter when courageous Vina Garrett offered to ride for him in EVERY INCH A CHAMPION, a novelet by Gladwell Richardson which brings you all the thrills and spills of the rodeo arena!

DEVOTION to his career is the keynote of the story Roy Rogers tells in MANY HAPPY TRAILS. This fascinating true life-story of a world-famous rodeo and movie star, told by himself, is one of the highlights of the next issue. It will thrill and inspire you!

ENTERTAINING and informative, A-ROPIN' AND A-RIDIN' brings you the true account of the career of Bob Crosby, famous rodeo champion known as "Wild Horse Bob." This is a colorful story written by himself especially for this magazine—and it's well worth reading.

OF COURSE, the next issue will also contain many short stories of rodeo action, as well as THRILLS IN RODEO, by Foghorn Clancy, and another IN THE ARENA chat. All in all, a gala number!

Three-Time CHAMP

By

KEN ROBERTS

National Bull-Riding Champion

I had my share of setbacks at first, but when I learned the ropes rodeo brought me life's finest rewards—love and fame!

Ken Roberts, cowboy champ

I WOULDN'T be honest with myself if I didn't admit I was proud of being national champion in the roughest, toughest event in one of world's roughest sports. The sport is rodeo, and those who know will agree that bull riding is as tough an event as any it offers.

I am proud of the fact that I have been able to win the national championship in bull riding three years in succession, for I have won over many of the greatest riders who ever mounted the hurricane deck of a bucking Brahma. Quite a number of these riders have won over me in single contests, and I know they are good, which is one more reason to make me happy that for three straight years I have been lucky enough to beat them all to the national championship.

How I Got That Way

You may wonder what makes a rodeo champion, or how anyone ever gets into this breakneck business. Well, here is the story of how I did it.

I was born at Council Grove, Kansas, January 22, 1918, son of E. C. Roberts, a rancher and quite a noted bronc rider in that section of the country. Let me say here that he can still fork a pretty good sunfishing bronc today. When I was eleven years old, my father branched out considerably in the stock business and we moved to a larger ranch near Strong City, Kansas. Aside from handling cattle, Dad used to buy wild horses by the carload and we would break them and ship them East at a nice profit.

My younger brother Gerald, who was the world's champion all around cowboy in 1942, and my sister Margie used to ride half broken broncs to school and it was not an uncommon sight to see all three of our mounts bucking at one time. One might get spooked at some trivial thing and start bucking and the other two were almost sure to join in and we would have a regular rodeo. I guess that was how I got my start. Then, too, our homework consisted mostly of breaking horses, and during vacations we got plenty of bronc riding practice, with Dad teaching us all he knew about riding bucking animals.

Work and Fun

Having so many horses to ride and break, we rough broke them. This means they were ridden and allowed to buck, or even made to buck, until they got tired of it and found it was of no use. This system is much faster than gentle breaking, and one rider can break many more horses in a given time. Then, since we had our own bucking chutes to speed up the saddling and handling of the horses, we had all the equipment we needed for little, impromptu Sunday rodeos.

So, like the postman who spends his off day strolling over his mail route, we spent our Sundays doing the same thing we did during the week days—riding broncs. The only difference was that we called it fun on Sundays and work on week days.

I don't think my brother, my sister or I had any idea when the three of us kids were riding broncs on the ranch that we would ever make any further use of our experience. I didn't think of a rodeo career until I was fifteen and attended a rodeo.

That day I came home with the idea that I was as good a bronc rider as any I had seen, and made up my mind to enter the rodeo game.

Keen Competition

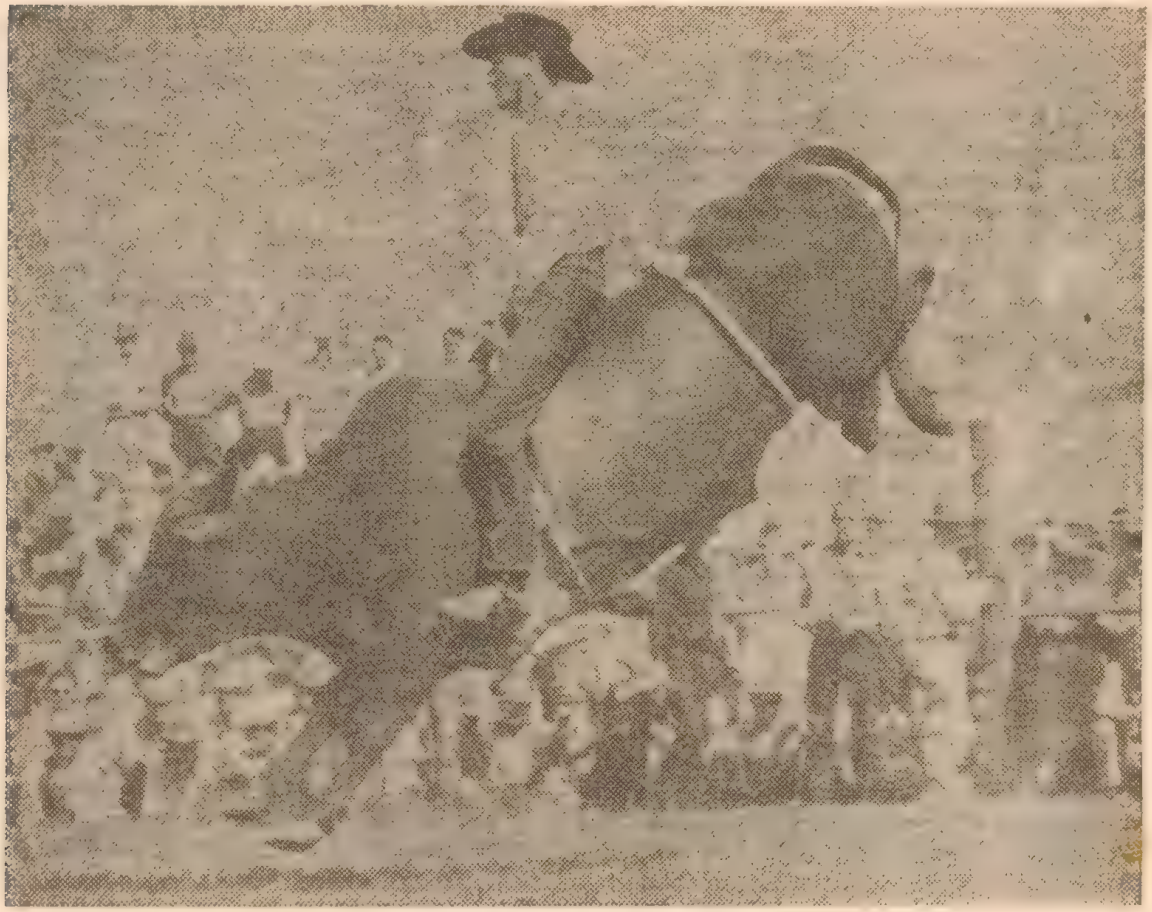
I was soon to find out that there was a vast difference between riding bucking horses just to break them, and riding buckers in a contest. Having somewhat of an exalted opinion of my ability, I tried to start at the top, contesting at the bigger rodeos where the prizes were large.

I soon learned that with those big prizes there was keen competition. The bronc riders were the best, and the bucking horses were the orneriest that ever came off the range.

As a result, I lost at my first rodeos, and I was soon plenty discouraged and wanted to quit.

My dad, having plenty of horse sense and wanting me to succeed, came to my aid. He watched me ride through a three day show. But he didn't offer me any advice until we got back home. He knew that having failed to win any prize money I'd be ready to listen then.

"You are plenty good for a youngster," he said. "But you've started too high up in the game. Go back to the little rodeos where the competition isn't so sharp, and where the riders aren't all of near-championship calibre. Start from there and make a study of everything you do."



Ken Roberts in action at a Western rodeo

I took dad's advice, only I went even a little further. After playing a few of the smaller rodeos, I took a job with a wildwest rodeo. There I was paid a regular salary, and since the rides were exhibitions and not contests I was paid just as much if I got bucked off as if I made a swell ride. Regardless, I handled myself as if each ride were a contest ride. I did not try to cheat the horses and I was particular not to do anything that would have disqualified me in a regular contest, such as hitting the horse with my hat or hand, or changing hands on the rein.

Observing the work of the best riders around the larger rodeos, I had noticed that the big, husky fellows carried off the most bronc riding purses. It occurred to me that most of the times I was bucked off or disqualified it had been because the horse had out-tugged me with the rein and had forced me either to pay out too much bucking rein or lose the rein altogether. I concluded that a light fellow like me could do as well as the husky ones if I developed unusual strength of arm and hands.

A Hand-Grip Device

With this in mind I fashioned a hand-grip machine out of two pieces of wood and a stout spring. I carried this device with me everywhere and made a habit of gripping it with my left, or rein hand. In addition, to develop arm-strength, I put in long hours chinning myself, particularly with my left hand and arm. I kept up this routine until I satisfied myself that I had acquired much extra strength in my arm and grip.

It was two years after my first fling at the rodeos before I was back contesting in them again. Avoiding the bigger shows this time, I entered many of the middle-sized ones through Kansas, Nebraska and Oklahoma. During this time I took up bull riding and made the same study of it that I had made of bronc riding.

Caution Is Important

Most rodeo contestants are fatalists, but I am not. I don't believe fate decrees, at the time of a person's birth, just when he will die. I think a careful person, as a rule, will outlive a careless one, and that one of the surest ways to invite the undertaker is to get forgetful when you're on the deck of a Brahma bull.

These vicious, bucking critters are man-haters and seem to delight in killing and maiming, and when you are out in the arena on the back of one of them you are on your own—except perhaps for the help of the rodeo clown who often risks his life to protect the men who try riding these savage bovines.

In 1936 I felt that I was ready to tackle the big shows again. I was eighteen, and a rodeo was about to open in Fort Worth, Texas, in connection with the Fat Stock Show there. This rodeo is one of the greatest in all the Southwest, and coming in March before the regular rodeo season gets under way in the North and East, it attracts tophand contestants in all events.

Though I won three day monies in bull riding, I was bucked off twice, and so I thought I had no chance to be picked as one of the ten high men for the finals. Therefore I left before the contest was over. Afterwards, I learned that so many riders had been bucked off that I had been picked as one of the ten high riders, and that if I had stayed I might have won the finals. As it was, for not staying to compete in the finals, I was disqualified from competing there the following year.

My Specialty

But the winning of three day monies in that field of really great riders, where the bulls were as tough as they come, gave me confidence in myself and indicated to me that bull riding should be my specialty.

Topping off modest successes through the middlewest and west, I finished that season by winning the bull riding at the Chicago World's Championship Rodeo. But it wasn't until the next year, 1937, that I really hit my stride. Then I won the bull riding at the Western National Livestock Show Rodeo in Denver, as well as bull riding, bareback bronc riding, and saddle bronc riding at many other shows throughout the west. Once again I topped it all off by winning the bull riding at the Chicago Championship Rodeo.

With more confidence than ever, and riding high, wide, and handsome, I found I was eligible to enter at Fort Worth again. I went there and won the bull riding. I followed the win up with victories at Cleveland, Ohio, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and at quite a string of western rodeos. Then, that fall, at Chicago, I did something that so far as I know

no other cowboy has ever done—win three of the five major events at a championship rodeo—bareback bronc riding, saddle bronc riding, and bull riding. The newspapers said that I had won everything but the Coliseum. I was so proud I felt as if I owned that too.

After a very good season in 1939, when I competed successfully, and for the first time at the World's Championship Rodeo in Madison Square Garden, New York, I hit a slump in 1940. Then in 1941, after starting off well in the spring, I was injured in a car wreck, and suffered a broken shoulder. The shoulder was left partially paralyzed, and it looked like my riding days were over.

I came back the next year, however, and had a big season, winning many events at important shows, and in 1943, after giving the boys plenty of competition all along the line and winning my share of prize money, I topped things off by winning the bull riding and fourth place in the finals of the bronc riding at the World's Championship Rodeo in Madison Square Garden, finishing the season with the necessary points to win the Rodeo Association of America title of—World's Champion Bull Rider!

1944 was another big year for me. I really went to town in bull riding, and again won the Rodeo Association title of champion bull rider. Then in 1945 I had my biggest year yet. With 11,038 points I finished in fourth place for the Rodeo Association of America title of World's Champion All Around cowboy. I won the R.A.A. title of Champion Bull Rider for the third year and also won the Rodeo Cowboys Association title of champion bull rider and second place in the same association's point standing in bronc riding.

I think that is a very good record and I am proud of it. I have been lucky to come through all that rough work all in one piece, and, too, I have been lucky in having something to ride for besides prize money. I'm referring to my wife, Ann, and to my little girl, Ann Charlene.

Enter—Romance!

There's an old saying that in spring a young man's fancy turns to love. Well, it was in the spring of 1941, in Cleveland, where I had come to compete in the rodeo, that I met Ann Payne, and little Cupid was right on the spot with his bow and arrow and he didn't miss. Ann was not only a swell girl, but she was also a redhead, my weakness.

It took me until February of the next year, though, and a lot of postage and long distance telephone calls to persuade her to marry me, which she did in Houston, Texas. From that day when I met Ann in Cleveland, romance has ridden with me in the arena and has spurred me on to do my best.

Now, besides our little golden-haired, brown-eyed girl, Ann Charlene, who will be four years old in September, we have a new baby girl, Patricia, who was born last January. We have a nice little ranch and a few cattle and I am specializing in Brahmas. My father and I are also accumulating a string of bucking stock and I intend to get into the producing end of the sport because I realize I can't always remain an active participant.

Well, folks, that's the story of my life as a rodeo performer, and I certainly can recommend the game to those of you who can take a few knocks along with its hard-won glory. As for me, rodeo is in my blood, the game has been kind to me, and I want to continue to be a part of the sport and mingle with the many warm personal friends I have acquired in eight years of riding the rough and tough ones—in the arenas of our land!

CAN YOUR SCALP PASS THE
*F-N TEST?
*The Famous Finger Nail Test
1 "It's F-N, the test for men!" Scratch your head—if you find dryness or loose dandruff you need Wildroot Cream-Oil. Buy the large economy size.
YOUR HAIR CAN LOOK LIKE THIS WITH NEW
WILDROOT CREAM-OIL
2 Only a little Wildroot Cream-Oil can do a big job for your hair. Keeps your hair well groomed all day long without a trace of that greasy, plastered down look! Your hair looks good and feels good too!
CREAM-OIL CHARLIE SAYS: "IT CONTAINS LANOLIN!"
3 Get Wildroot Cream-Oil from your barber or drug counter.
AND TUNE IN... "The Adventures of Sam Spade" on CBS Network every Sunday.
WILDROOT CREAM-OIL
LANOLIN

"Good for you!" said Forge, as Jean returned to the chutes. "I had a two-hundred-dollar bet on that race!"

A Complete Romantic Novelet

Arena Reapers

By CLIFF WALTERS

When Jean Warren and red-headed Forge Stafford pitch in to make a rodeo a success, a ghost town comes to life—and true love rides once more over the rolling rangeland!

CHAPTER I

Ghost Town

RUNNING beautifully in smooth, even strides, the little black and white horse circled the arena. Just as smoothly the pinto's little rider, Jean Warren, went through her tricks. Every daring speed-and-balance stunt she had seen any other trick rider execute. And with a couple of her own breath-taking originations thrown in for good measure.

Yet when the pinto was heading for the exit gate, when Jean doffed her limp-brimmed old Stetson to the stands, there was no applause. Those stands were empty. As empty, as ghostlike as they had been for five long years.

Then—the suddenness of it was like a bolt from the blue—a lusty cheer did go up. A wild whoop from a smiling red-headed six-footer who stood there in the exit gate.

"Hooray for the pint-sized performer on the pinto!" he shouted. "Hooray for her big brown eyes and lustrous brown hair! Hooray for—"

Jean, whose big brown eyes had been

staring, blurted:

"Forge Stafford!"

"Son of the old village blacksmith in person!" he said, eagerly he strode forward, reached up, and started to whisk the petite, shapely girl from her saddle. But she grabbed the ample horn of that saddle and clung there.

"Hey, you!" she cried. "I can shake hands without that!"

"Is that the best you can do—just shake hands with the old schoolmate you used to idolize?" he asked mockingly.

"Idolize!" she scoffed. "If you haven't got scars all over that beautiful red head of yours, it's only because I never could throw rocks straight enough."

His bright blue eyes smiled up at her as he pointed to a tiny scar at the corner of his mouth.

"You left your trade-mark there, you little wildcat," he said. "And why? All I did was smear a little axle-grease on your hair, and slip a couple of cockle-burs down your neck."

"And duck my head under the water when I was taking a drink out of Boom Creek. And spook my pony till he nearly threw me."

"Gosh! Did I do all that? In one day?"

"You did. But don't let remorse crush the strapping-shouldered gent you've grown up to be. All—all is forgiven."

JEAN'S laugh rippled across the high-walled rodeo park. A laugh as warm as the May sunshine which flooded the Wyoming hills today.

"Good!" said "Forge" Stafford, whose nickname had been acquired long ago, because of the similarity of color between his red hair and the flame which used to burn in the forge of his father's blacksmith shop. "I've been crawlin' on my hands and knees across a hundred miles of cactus-cluttered badlands just to hear you say you'll forgive me."

"You lie faster than a relay horse can start traveling," Jean interrupted. "What *are* you doing here in Warrenville, Forge?"

"Trailin' a bunch of rodeo stock, which belongs to me and my pard, Cloudy Clark, down to the comin'-up rodeo at Vail City."

"Vail City," Jean repeated, and her smile was gone. "Well, that's only ten miles from here, and it's a good three hours till supper time. You'll make it easily."

"We're stoppin' here over night," was the reply. "The stock's already in your dad's pasture across the crick. And old Cloudy's playin' checkers with your dad right now. And it'll be a *good* three hours till supper time, if you'll spend 'em with me. Oh, it won't take me quite that long to tell you how pretty you've grown up to be. We can talk, too, about how you're goin' down to Vail City and show 'em some trick ridin' that *is* ridin'! Doggone! When I saw you dustin' it around that track a while ago—"

"I'm not going to Vail City," Jean said quietly but firmly. "That's one place the Warren family—Dad, Mother and myself—keep away from. You should remember why."

"Still feudin' with Roger Vail, eh? But why, Jeannie? Hadn't the Warrens might as well admit that they've lost? Warrenville's nothing but a ghost town. And they tell me that Vail City's growin', that there's over three hundred people livin' there now."

"I don't care if there's three thousand," she answered. "Grandpa Warren started this town thirty years ago. It's ten times the town site, and ten times prettier, than Vail City ever will be!"

There was no refuting this argument. Vail City, although now prospering under the aggressiveness of its founder, Roger Vail, was not an ideal town site. Huddled in a bend of Boom Creek, ten miles below Warrenville, Vail City had not been planted on high enough ground. So contended Jean's father, Sid Warren, who though a mild-mannered man, had always insisted upon that.

"There's a reason why this old stream was named Boom Crick by my dad," Sid Warren always said. "When the old June sun bears down too hard, and cuts the snow off the Tilt Rock Mountains up there too fast—well, the quitters that left Warrenville and followed Roger Vail to a new place, they'll see. They'll see!"

But the years had gone on. Seven of them since Warrenville had started to become a ghost town. And the high waters of June hadn't swollen, as yet, to flood proportions. Roger Vail, a stocky, rock-jawed man who had once been a citizen of Warrenville, jeered at Sid Warren's "spook talk," and kept on selling lots in Vail City. And raking in profits from his saloon, his store and his livery stable in the ever-growing town.

Almost without exception, the citizens of this range—Tilt Rock Basin—were convinced that Sid Warren had made the mistake of

his life when, after an altercation with Roger Vail, Warren had bought out the Vail saloon in Warrenville. With the stipulation that Vail himself would leave town.

Sid Warren had paid too much for the saloon that now stood deserted. And Vail, who had won a hundred acres of land in a poker game, had moved only ten miles away, to start his new town on that questionably won land.

The Warrens clung to their same old home. They couldn't do much else. No one wanted to buy a ghost town, however pretty its setting. It was Jean's father who owned the false-fronted buildings where business men, renting from Sid Warren, had once prospered. And a few cattle and horses, bearing the Warren brand, grazed over the streets of the failing town, grazed about the rodeo stadium which had been built by Sid Warren.

Only two shows had ever been staged in that rodeo arena where now a dark-eyed girl, the daughter of a ghost town, put a black and white pinto pony through his paces. But Jean had to do something to break the deadly monotony.

Well, the deadly monotony was broken today. Forge Stafford, once a gangling, mischievous kid, was in Warrenville again, with a hint of the old mischief dancing in his bright blue eyes.

"Jean," he was saying, "you've *got* to put on your trick-ridin' act in Vail City. As much as I hate to admit it, you'd be a fair rider if you'd let me show you a trick or two I learned up in Montana last year. Of course, after wastin' your life residin' in this tomb town, you'd probably stampede if you were to see all of a dozen people at one time. But I'll hold your hand."

"You can hold your tongue, too, if you think I'm going down to Vail City, and have Roger Vail baring his fangs at me. He's madder than ever at Dad now, because Dad wouldn't practically give him this rodeo stadium, and he had to buy new lumber to build a new one."

"What time'll you be ready to start in the morning?" he asked.

"I'm *not* going to Vail City!"

JEAN meant that when she said it. Yet when the following morning rolled around, and when "Cloudy" Clark, Forge's partner, decided to ride over to Cow Creek and look at a couple of bucking horses he had heard about, and when Forge said he'd just have to get someone to help him herd the rodeo stock to Vail City, or they might get away from him, that changed things.

"You can ride within sight of Vail City with Forge, can't you, Jean?" said the girl's quiet mother, a neat little woman.

"Well—" Jean wavered.

"Go ahead," said her father. "Stay overnight and go to the rodeo the next day if you want to. I know you're dyin' to see it." Sid Warren spoke gruffly, as if he were disgusted.

"Yeah, and I'll look after you," Forge Stafford said to the surprised girl. "I may even take you to the dance down there, if you'll buy the tickets."

"Why, who'd ever thought your heart would get to be as big as one of your feet?" Jean countered. "The last time I tried to dance with you, I thought you were wearing cast-iron snowshoes. And somebody hollered, 'Hey, Jean! You'd better get away from that fence pole you're holdin' up there. It's afire on one end.' "

"It was Shorty Dixon that hollered that out," said Sid Warren, smiling as he glanced down the street at the big old community hall his father had built. "We had lots of fun then." Warren's eyes turned grave again, as if the past were better forgotten.

"Come on, Jeannie," said Forge. "Let's get started."

It was fun for Jean, riding through the morning sunlight, riding beside Forge, listening to his carefree banter, and through sage-scented dust raised by the hoofs of bucking horses that tomorrow would pit their mustang strength against the skill of applauded riders. There were long-horned steers, too, that would feel the sharp snare of encircling lariats in the roping contest.

Ahead lay excitement. Gaiety, thrills and spills. Color—and life! But Jean told herself she would ride only up to the fringe of it. Then she would say good-by to Forge Stafford, a good-by she didn't want to say, and turn her pinto horse homeward. She would go back to the depressing silence of a ghost town which no longer had even a post-office.

Jean didn't want to go back. But there was pride. And prejudice, perhaps. She didn't want smug, chesty Roger Vail, her father's enemy, to see her in the town that had killed Warrenville. Nor did she want to be seen there by husky, handsome young Kirk Dulane who managed Vail's large store, and

who bought and sold livestock for Vail.

Kirk Dulane, educated son of a competent gambler who had long worked for Vail, had ridden up to Warrenville several times lately—on livestock buying missions, he said. The last time he had remarked to Jean:

"You'll forget this silly feud with my boss and move down to Vail City some day. When you get tired of being a she-hermit. I'll give you a job clerking in the store. It'll be a lot better for you than playing rodeo, riding around an empty arena on a pinto plug, and imagining you're going to startle the world with your riding tricks some day."

"Pinto plug!" Jean had flared. "If that's what you think of Magpie, you shouldn't be trusted to buy livestock—with your boss' ill-gotten gain! I wouldn't work in Vail's customer-gypping store if you'd give it to me! Now go on back to Vail City. Why try to get me to go there, when Miss Alberta Vail, the gorgeous blonde, is already there? Tell her to work in the store, if you need some help."

"You know that Alberta wouldn't work in the store," Kirk had said.

"Neither will I," Jean had snapped.

Jean was thinking of turning back from the vicinity of Vail City now when blonde Alberta Vail, fetchingly garbed in a green riding outfit, and astride a beautiful, flaxen-maned sorrel horse, came galloping over a ridge. Beside the blond girl rode dark, handsome Kirk Dulane who slowed his horse.

"You must be Stafford or Clark!" he called. "I was wondering if you were ever going to get here with that rodeo stock."

"I'm Stafford," called Forge. "The rodeo don't start till tomorrow, does it? Hi, there, Taffy-Top! Remember me?"

Alberta Vail smiled, offered a gloved hand.

"Why, Forge Stafford!" she said. "So the gangling, rusty-feathered duckling grew up to become the handsome red swan!"

"You surely remember Jean here, don't you, Alberta?" Forge said.

"Jean Warren, you mean?" said Miss Vail lightly. "Why, so it is! I haven't seen her in years. Hello, Jean darling. Why, you don't look at all like a ghost town ghost. Or should I say ghostess?"

Miss Vail laughed. Jean was uncomfortable, wishing she had turned back a mile ago.

"You should be an authority on spirits," she replied. "The Vails have peddled enough of them over the bar."

"Now, don't be like that, Jeannie," said Forge, while Miss Vail didn't know what to say. "Us three kids used to play together."

"You two can play together now, because I'm going home," Jean said. And turned her pinto.

"We'll help you corral this stock," said Alberta to Forge. "Let the dark-eyed little darling go on home—wagging her grudges behind her!"

CHAPTER II
New Horizons

THE pinto had jogged off two miles on the homeward trail when Jean, thinking of the excitement that lay behind, and dreading the solitude that lay ahead, heard hoofs slapping the earth behind her. She turned quickly, eagerly. But the oncoming rider was not Forge Stafford. It was Kirk Dulane.

"Won't you come back to Vail City?" Kirk asked, as he caught up with her.

"No," said Jean.

"Mind if I ride along home with you then?"

"Aren't you afraid Alberta will miss you?" Jean asked wryly.

"Not since a handsome red swan flew over the horizon," he replied.

"Red swan!" Jean retorted. "Bay buzzard!"

"Jealous?"

"No!" she fibbed. "But he might have had the decency to thank me for helping him this morning."

"Maybe he would have, if he hadn't suddenly been dazzled by blond lightning." Kirk smiled. "It had me dazzled—once."

"Once? Is that why, of late, you've been according the poor little ghost towner some attention?"

"It's because I'm learning to tell the difference between gold that doesn't try to glitter—and brass that does. I'm going to leave Vail City. I'm getting fed up with the Vails, both father and daughter. And I'm tired of seeing my own father, Deuce Dulane, playing the rôle of hired gambler in Vail's saloon."

"Ten days ago you were asking me to move to Vail City," Jean said.

"I'm glad you didn't," he answered. "You deserve something better than that counterfeit town."

"Where are you going, Kirk?"

"I'm going to stop being a hired hand for the Vails. I'm going to break away and make some money for myself."

"Get a store of your own somewhere, you mean?" asked Jean.

"I know where I can pick up a bunch of rodeo stock," Kirk told her. "That's what I'm going to do. Gosh! When I see the way folks are pouring into Vail City, and just for a one-day rodeo, I'm convinced that there's plenty of money to be made at the rodeo game. If I can get enough money together to get me a good bunch of stock, and if I can persuade the world's coming trick rider to trail along with me, and bring her pinto horse—"

"Gee, Kirk! Do you mean that?" Jean's spirits began to soar.

"You bet I mean it!" His dark eyes met hers steadily.

Jean's spirits kept on soaring. Beyond horizons surrounding the sepulchral ghost town of Warrenville, horizons over which she had traveled only in dreams, a dark-eyed girl could see a new world. One pulsing with life. She could see flags flying above strange towns. She could hear the blare of bands, the wild applause of thrill-loving rodeo fans.

"Maybe you can help me get that string of rodeo stock," Kirk was saying.

"Just tell me how!" Jean replied.

"Well, thirty miles north of here, they're cutting up the big cow outfit that old man Doherty left when he died. Breaking the ranch and range up into small parcels. It's a prairie country, that. No timber. The new land buyers will need buildings on their new tracts. And there's plenty of buildings in a certain ghost town near here—if your dad will sell them cheap enough so that I can afford to tear the logs down and haul them over to the Prairie Butte range."

"Oh, gosh!" Jean moaned. "I'm afraid Dad won't sell."

"Maybe not," Kirk sighed. "I know how stubborn he is, how he clings to the hope that some miracle might turn Warrenville into a living town again. But miracles are scarce, Jean. A darn sight scarcer than money-making rodeos. If you *could* prevail upon your dad to help us get started, we could do wonders."

"I'll do my best!" she promised. "Gee, Kirk! Wouldn't it be fun to travel? To see people, hundreds of them in every town, at their happiest?" Tears glistened in a pair of dark eyes suddenly bright with dreams.

Hoofs were slapping the ground behind Jean again. She turned, saw Forge Stafford galloping up.

"Roger Vail wants you to come back to town, Dulane," the handsome redhead called. "And pronto. I'll bet you're disappointed that it ain't Alberta, the beautiful blonde, who's beggin' you to come home."

"I didn't know that swans crowed," Kirk coolly replied. "Not even the handsome red swan. And because he's acquired some new green plumage!"

He was looking at the green neckerchief that Alberta Vail had been wearing less than an hour ago. Jean was looking at it too.

Kirk said good-by to Jean, promised to see her soon, and rode back toward Vail City.

"Chilly all at once, ain't it, Jeannie?" said Forge, grinning.

"You shouldn't be chilly," she retorted. "Not with that new green decoration around your graceful swan neck."

"Alberta wanted me to have it," he said. "Can I help it if my he-beauty and heart-warmin' smile stirred the gal's generosity? Or should I have turned and run like you did, when you saw her?"

"Oh, go on back to Vail City, you big rodeo man!" Jean snapped.

"I will, if you'll come back with me. And promise to do your trick-ridin' act tomorrow."

"I'm going home."

"Yeah. And waggin' your grudges behind you, as Alberta said."

"Yes, Alberta! May her green scarf choke you!"

"If you'd forget your grudges and—"

"If you'd get out of my sight, I'd appreciate it."

"What's the matter, Jeannie?" he said. "Are you scared to put on your trick-ridin' act in front of a bunch of people? Can't you get up gumption enough to entertain anybody except that bunch of ghosts hauntin' the old Warrenville rodeo grounds?"

"Oh, stop squawking, you handsome red swan!"

FORGE might not have been a swan, but he was getting red.

"I'd like to take you over my knee and paddle you, you fang-showin' she-hermit!" he growled. "Either that or kiss you hard enough to thaw the ice out of your eyes."

"You touch me and I'll wrap something besides a green scarf around your neck!" said

Jean, unlooping the quirt from her saddle-horn.

"Listen, Jeannie," Forge answered calmly, "if you won't trick-ride tomorrow, will you let me borrow your pinto for another girl to ride? I'll be responsible for the pinto and see that he's all right."

"I'm not lending Magpie to anyone!" Jean said firmly. She touched spurs to the pinto and galloped on.

"Sorry I haven't got time to chase you now!" Forge shouted after her. "But don't think you're gettin' away from me!"

A moment later Jean glanced over her shoulder. Forge was riding slowly toward Vail City.

"Red swan!" Jean snapped to herself. "Asking to borrow my horse. I can spend months training Magpie and then let some other girl step in and take the glory. And what money goes with it. Oh, yeah?"

Pleasanter thoughts came to her then as she rode on homeward toward a ghost town. Maybe she *could* prevail upon her father to sell those numerous unoccupied buildings in Warrenville. If he would—well, the pattern of Jean's life might change. And for the better. Rodeo stock furnished by Kirk Dulane. . . . Trick rider, Jean Warren. . . . The blare of band music, the fluttering of flags above rodeo grounds.

Jean dreamed the lonely miles away. Then she was home, was turning Magpie into the pasture.

"You had a long ride today, little horse," she was saying. "Tomorrow you can rest and eat green grass. I'll ride old Buck, if I ride at all."

That evening at the supper table Jean casually broached the subject of selling some of the log buildings in Warrenville. "Why not?" Mrs. Warren said.

Even Sid Warren glanced up with interest in his eye.

But when Jean mentioned Kirk Dulane's name, her father froze up. There would be no tearing down and selling of buildings, he said flatly.

"What are you going to do with them, Dad?" Jean countered. "Let them stand here and rot in this ghost town?"

"Yes, before I'll sell them to any of the Dulane tribe of tinhorn gamblers—Vail henchmen!" Warren said wrathfully.

"But Kirk isn't a tinhorn gambler," Jean entreated. "And he wants to get away from Roger Vail. That's why he's trying to—"

"To marry Vail's conceited blond daughter!" Warren snapped. "And settle down in Vail's house for the rest of his life!"

"You're wrong, Dad," Jean persisted.

"You're wrong, if you have anything to do with a Dulane," said her father.

Jean's patience snapped then. "Perhaps I shouldn't speak to anyone," she remarked. "Just mope around this graveyard called Warrenville, and live like a—a she-hermit!"

"Don't say that, dear," said her mother. "Things are bound to change sooner or later. They can't go on this way. Either Warrenville must live again, or it must die forever."

"It's already died!" countered the girl. "Only Dad won't admit it."

"Maybe you're right," said Sid Warren, calm again, and rather resigned. "Maybe we will sell some of these old buildings. But not to a Dulane or a Vail. I'll burn those buildings first."

Jean remained silent. She was aware that if the dream she harbored tonight was going to be realized, if the buildings of Warrenville were to be torn down and hauled away, then the dream her father still clung to would be forever wrecked. Well, it looked as if Kirk Dulane would have to raise money by some other means. But how? And when?

For a long time Jean lay awake in her room that night. And in spirit she was in a forbidden town—Vail City. She mingled with the crowd already converging upon the town. She saw bright-shirted rodeo contestants—rollicking, jibe-tossing buckaroos, ropers, and husky bull-doggers. She saw gay girls in colorful riding outfits. She heard the music coming from the dance hall, and wondered if Forge Stafford would be dancing with Alberta Vail. He probably would!

The next day found Jean still restless, with her thoughts forever roaming in the direction of Vail City. When dinner was over she went down to the barn, a large, ghostly structure that had once been a livery stable, and saddled old Buck, her father's horse.

As if drawn by a magnet, the girl rode toward Vail City. And over the horn of her saddle was slung a battered leather case which contained her father's field-glasses.

IT WAS nearly two o'clock in the afternoon when Jean, shunning the road, stopped her buckskin on a high, cedared promontory overlooking the town of Vail City. It was a town that was fairly seething with activity today.

Sitting with her back against a rock, Jean put the field-glasses to her eyes and looked down upon the newly constructed rodeo grounds on the bank of Boom Creek. The whole lay-out down there was too small, the girl quickly decided. The arena was too small. The grandstand was already overflowing. And people were still coming.

The show got under way, opening with the bareback riding event. Glasses glued to her eyes, little hands tense, Jean watched a slim, black horse come rocking out of the chutes and spill his rider. Then a big gray horse on which some red-shirted rider—Jean couldn't identify people at that distance—made a nice ride, and won applause.

From that moment on the glasses remained glued to the eyes of a fascinated girl who, although she had censured herself for what she was doing, was now far too enraptured to think of anything save the scene that was being enacted below. This was the world of which she had dreamed of being a part.

The next event was a cowgirl's race. There were six entries, but the winner of the contest was a tall, slender girl, dressed in a green riding outfit, and riding a flaxen-maned sorrel.

As that sorrel horse swept to victory down the stretch in front of the stands, Jean gripped her glasses.

"Alberta Vail," she muttered. "The Vails always win, darn 'em!"

Then came the calf roping event, the singing lariats that hissed out and snared their speeding victims. Cowboys bounding from the backs of well-trained horses to bust and tie their calves.

The the ladies' relay race. Three contestants in this event. And Alberta Vail, using her sorrel, a bay and a gray—and winning. Jean, gripping her glasses a little harder, grudgingly admitting that Alberta was quite a rider.

"They always win, darn 'em!" she repeated.

Time and swift-moving events sped by. There was the bucking contest, and Jean found out that Forge Stafford and his partner, Cloudy Clark, had a real string of buckers. Only three of ten riders stayed till the gun cracked. And one of them was pulling leather.

Alberta Vail was appearing again, this time riding a pinto horse, a black and white pinto. Jean suddenly turned to a statue. If that wasn't a dead ringer for her own little horse, Magpie!

Alberta was trick riding, turning around in her saddle, turning back, standing up. She waved to the applauding crowd. Then something happened. The rider lost balance and went down, while the little black and white pinto galloped on.

In the echo of those galloping hoofs, Jean—she had come to her feet—heard Forge Stafford saying:

"Listen, Jeannie. If you won't trick-ride tomorrow, will you let me borrow your pinto for another girl to ride?"

CHAPTER III

Bury It—Or Bring It Back to Life

FURY gripped Jean Warren now at the startling thought which had come to her. She ran to the old buckskin horse that was dozing nearby, bounded to the saddle, and went galloping down the steep-sided promontory with a recklessness that only firey rage could prompt.

The buckskin forded Boom Creek, stirrup-deep, and broke into a swift lope that brought his rider, a pale, tight-lipped little rider, nearer and nearer to the grounds where a rodeo show was about over.

A tipsy man who worked in Vail's livery stable was leaving the rodeo grounds, heading back toward town—and the saloon. Seeing Jean, he bellowed lustily:

"Well, look who we've got with us, folks! The gallopin' ghost from ghost town! Hey, ghostess! Shake hands with Bourbon Jones!"

The drunk reeled toward the fast-approaching buckskin. The horse's shoulder hit "Bourbon" Jones, knocking him sprawling into the dust.

"That buckskin horse ain't no ghost, Bourbon!" a bystander yelled.

Jean didn't look back. She rode into the grounds, ignoring two gatekeepers who tried to stop her, rode up to the chutes where Forge Stafford and Roger Vail were walking a pale and shaken blond girl between them.

Jean stopped beside Magpie. With angry, trembling fingers she jerked the new saddle off his back and flung it viciously down into the dirt.

"You've got your nerve comin' here, Miss Warren!" rumbled Roger Vail. "You! Gettin' big-hearted all at once, and lendin' us a

club-footed crowbait that might've broke Alberta's neck!"

"Maybe that's why little Jean's so mad," put in Alberta weakly. "That crowbait didn't break my neck."

"Too bad he didn't!" Jean snapped. "But I didn't lend him to you. That long-geared buzzard there came up and stole my pinto out of the pasture last night, after I'd refused to lend him to anyone!"

She pointed a trembling finger at mute and staring Forge Stafford.

"Hold on now, Jeannie," Forge said. "You're jumpin' at conclusions!"

Then Forge was jumping. Jumping aside to escape the fancy bridle that Jean was throwing at him.

There were no reins on that bridle. Not now. Jean, pulling an old jack-knife from her overalls, had quickly, angrily cut those reins off at the bit. Now she tied them together and looped one end of the long strand around Magpie's neck.

"You'll pay for them reins!" Roger Vail said, and started for Jean who was about to mount her buckskin.

"Hold on, Vail!" said Forge Stafford. He extended a restraining hand toward the stocky, barrel-chested man.

"Get out of my way!" Vail tried to shove Forge aside.

Forge wouldn't shove. Vail tried to knock the redhead aside with his fist. Contestants and spectators came running. They got there in time to see Forge Stafford smash a blow to Vail's protruding jaw. Vail went down, crashing against the new saddle that Jean had thrown upon the ground.

Jean was in her own saddle, was already leading her pinto horse homeward, at a fast trot. She was glad the pinto led well. She didn't want people in Vail City to see her crying, and she knew she couldn't fight the tears back much longer. Already she was wishing she had been calmer about recovering her pinto that had been stolen out of a pasture near Warrenville last night. . . .

Supper that evening was not a happy meal for Jean and her parents. Mrs. Warren thought Jean shouldn't have acted as impulsively as she had. But Sid Warren, dark eyes smoldering, angrily declared that Jean had been justified in her actions.

"If Roger Vail had laid a hand on you, I'd have killed him," Warren said.

"Yes, you would," his wife agreed. "All of which proves that Jean, in a fit of temper, might have precipitated a murder. She might have sent you on your way to the gallows!"

"Don't say that, Mother!" cried the girl, shuddering.

"It's the truth, isn't it?" asked Mrs. Warren quietly.

"Yes," Jean admitted.

"You can thank Forge Stafford, then, for confining the affair to a fist brawl," said Jean's mother.

"I'm not thanking him for anything!" Jean hotly declared. "I'm blaming him for everything that happened. If he hadn't been so darned eager to make Alberta Vail the whole show. . . . If he'd got knocked down himself, he would only have been getting what he deserved! And he would have been knocked down, if I'd been a man!"

"But," argued her mother, "you don't know for certain that Forge took your horse. "Are you so wrought up because he borowed your pinto horse without your permission," said Mrs. Warren, "or are you so terribly wrought up because you think he borrowed the horse for Alberta Vail?"

"Forge didn't borrow the horse at all," said a deep, drawling voice.

THE Warren family stared at gangling, sober-faced Cloudy Clark, the partner of Forge Stafford, who stood there—by bending a little—in the open doorway.

"What's that, Clark?" snapped Sid Warren.

"I said my pard didn't borrow the pinto," replied the tall man, his censuring gray eyes holding to Jean, and making her uncomfortable.

"Indeed!" said Jean. "Did Mr. Stafford send you up here to try smoothing things over, just in case I might want to send over to Cedarton for the sheriff?"

"Don't you think you've made fool enough of yourself without draggin' the Law in?" Clark retorted. "Oh, I know that Forge asked to borrow your horse, all right. And after you was too timid a little violet to ride him yourself down there today. But Forge wasn't tryin' to borrow the pinto for Miss Vail. He was tryin' to borrow him for his cousin, Laura Vanning, who lives over in Cedarton."

Jean blinked. Forge did have a cousin in Cedarton, a reckless, freckle-faced girl who was as red-headed as Forge himself and who, Jean had heard, had done some bronc riding at the Fourth of July celebration in the

county seat last summer.

"Laura Vanning owns a good little palamino," Cloudy Clark went on calmly, "but the palamino got kicked on the front leg and lamed pretty bad just day before yesterday."

"Then why, in heaven's name, didn't Laura Vanning ride Jean's pinto this afternoon?" Sid Warren demanded. "As long as Forge had helped himself to the pinto sometime last night?"

"Forge didn't borrow the pinto," Cloudy maintained. "Forge didn't know the pinto was in Vail City—till he seen Alberta Vail ride him into the arena. Forge turned to me and said, 'For gosh sake, Cloudy, how come she's ridin' Jeannie's horse?' "

"Why didn't Mr. Stafford come up here—with his own alibis?" Jean asked.

"I don't think he wanted you to see him, not with his handsome face all battered up the way it is."

"Whu—what happened to him?" Jean blurted.

"Well, Roger Vail had too many of his hired men around the rodeo grounds," Cloudy explained. "They ganged up on Forge, shortly after he'd busted Vail on the jaw. Before me, and some of the other contesters could come to Forge's much-needed assistance, he was takin' about all the punishment one gent can stand."

"Oh!" said Jean.

"Yeah, that was quite a mix-up you started," Cloudy went on. "Fists was flyin' like ducks headin' south. And when it was over, and me and Forge was politely requested to leave town, we collected just half of what we were supposed to have had for furnishin' stock to Mr. Vail's rodeo. Bein' so far in the minority, I guess we was lucky to get out of town with half our money—and our stock."

"Oh!" said Jean, more weakly this time. "Whu—where's Forge now?"

"About a quarter of a mile east of here, trailin' our stock in the direction of our next show," said Cloudy. "Any message, Miss Warren?"

"I'll give it to him myself!"

Jean darted past the gangling man in the doorway. Soon she was on the back of a little pinto and riding eastward. Fast.

Dusk was settling over the hills when Jean overtook a tall redhead whose handsome face showed evidence of the punishment he had taken in the afternoon. Yet he managed a wry grin.

"Is all—all forgiven again, Jeannie?" he asked.

"I'm the one that's come to beg forgiveness," she said, and her voice was none too steady. "Gosh, Forge! If I'd realized what an avalanche I was starting this afternoon, I'd never have gone to Vail City."

"Don't blame yourself too much," he drawled. "I realize that the evidence was against me."

"I could've given you a chance to explain if I hadn't been such blundering, hot-headed little fool."

"Easy on those names. Remember, Jeannie Warren, you're talkin' about the little playmate I used to love. And maybe still do."

"Don't say things like that when you ought to be using your quirt on me, Forge. Cloudy told me about your losing half the money you had coming."

"I didn't tell him to spill that bad news," declared Forge. "I only asked him to put you straight on the fact that I didn't borrow your pinto. But, for gosh sake, put me straight on something. Who in thunder *did* borrow that pinto, and for Miss Vail to ride? Or to try ridin'?"

"I don't know. Perhaps I'll never know, Forge. Vail has a bunch of crooks working for him, of course. And Alberta, who was grabbing all the glory she could this afternoon, probably thought I'd never be close enough to see what was going on at that rodeo."

"She wasn't around all morning," Forge said. "Now I'm pretty sure she was out practising trick ridin'—on the same pinto horse I'd told her about with my own big mouth. Well, that's what I call crust. I wouldn't think she'd dare risk doin' such a thing, knowin' that you might've missed the pinto from the pasture."

JEAN tossed her head as she laughed sarcastically.

"Don't worry about the Vail nerve," she replied. "Well, Forge, I see Cloudy coming. I suppose it'll be a long time before I see you again. If ever!"

"I won't be comin' back to Vail City next May. That's a cinch."

"Oh, I'm sorry I caused so much trouble!" Jean cried.

"Don't feel sorry for me," he said, smiling. "You'd ought to see Roger Vail's mug. I slanted his nose off toward the North Star for him, and knocked one of his big eyebrows

down so far it nearly crowded the mustache off his tooth-loosened mouth."

"I wish Dad could have seen that," said the girl. "Vail gave him an awful beating once. What about Kirk Dulane? Was he in the free-for-all battle?"

"Nope. He was there, but not in it. He was wise enough—or yellow enough—to keep his handsome hunk of manhood intact." Forge's voice took on a trace of edge.

"He's all right, Forge," Jean said. "He's fed up with Vail, too."

There was a pause. Then Forge said, "Why don't you ride back home and tell your folks that you're comin' to the Rocky Point Rodeo with me and Cloudy? That town's only sixty miles from here."

"I couldn't do that, Forge. Some day I hope to be a rodeo performer, But not on such short notice. Kirk Dulane wants me to—" Jeannie caught herself, but too late.

"Oh, I see." Forge nodded reflectively. "Young Mr. Dulane has something to do with your plans, eh?"

"Well—yes," Jean answered hesitantly.

"Most anything would be better than stagnatin' in the ghost town you're livin'—pardon me—existin' in now," Forge said. "Why don't you either bury it or bring it back to life? It could be brought back. It's ten times the place Vail City is for a town."

"But how *can* we bring it back?" demanded the girl.

"You've got buildin's down there. Fill 'em up—if you have to give 'em to somebody. Put on a dance in that old hall. Give away chances on lots or houses with every ticket. Or put on a rodeo and lure people there to see what a pretty spot Warrenville is! You've got twice the rodeo outfit that Vail built in his would-be town!"

"But Dad can't afford to anything like that!" Jean protested.

"All right. I'll furnish the rodeo stock free. And Cloudy and me'll be comin' back across this range about the fifth of June, my birthday."

Cloudy Clark fell in behind a bunch of rodeo stock. But Forge didn't join his partner. He talked to Jean for an hour, while a big moon crept up among the branches of cottonwoods which lined Boom Creek, a broad stream which winked with silver eyes at the girl and man who sat and talked on the hill above.

Then Forge said good-by. He moved as if to take Jean in his arms when he spoke those parting words. And Jean, her dark eyes full of dreams again, would have let him. But Forge said:

"I'd better not. Maybe Kirk Dulane wouldn't like it."

Before Jeannie could say anything, Forge was riding away.

"The fifth of June!" he called back over his shoulder. "Come one, come all! And see a ghost town come to life! Beautiful cowgirls. Reckless cowboys! And Jeannie, the wonder girl, trick ridin' on Magpie, the pinto steed that Forge Stafford did *not* steal out of a pasture!"

Jean waved at the tall rider who quickened his pace to overtake his pard. Dust billowed up like silver smoke in the moonlight.

"June the fifth," Jean echoed softly. "Is Warrenville really coming to life again? Or can it?" Tears came to her dark eyes as she said prayerfully, "It must! Oh, it'll be hard to convince Mom and Dad. But I've got two hundred dollars of my own money, and it must be done!"

CHAPTER IV
Souvenirs?

WHEN Jean spoke to her parents the next morning about holding a rodeo in Warrenville, her father bluntly accused her of joking. When she mentioned Forge's offer, Sid Warren said that Forge must have been out of his mind. Mrs. Warren said nothing. She was too shocked for speech.

"Rodeo in Warrenville!" Sid Warren said disgustedly. "You might as well try tyin' some wings on Magpie and flyin' over the moon!"

"I think it's about time you tried something, Dad," said Jean. "Something besides sitting around this ghastly ghost town nursing a grudge against the man who killed it. At least Roger Vail has gumption enough to do something."

"Roger Vail!" Sid Warren growled. "If you admire him so much, you can move down to Vail City. Nobody's stoppin' you!"

"Jean doesn't admire him," put in Mrs. Warren. "What can I do, Jean dear, to help you out with your plans?" Mrs. Warren's placid gray eyes had suddenly taken on life.

"You can write some advertisements and

send 'em over to the paper at Cedarton, and the papers at Rangecroft and Willow Bend. Forge says he'll advertise our show wherever he goes between now and June fifth, which is only two weeks away. And he'll tell all the contestants that there'll be worthwhile prizes."

"And plenty of camping space," said Mrs. Warren. "We'll clean up all the buildings in town and throw them open to mothers with children!"

"And have free barbecued beef," continued Jean, encouraged at finding an ally. "If I could find a nice fat yearling steer that we could kill!"

"I saw one yesterday with our brand on it," put in Sid Warren. "I'll clean out the old barbecue pit and get it ready."

"Bless you, Dad!" cried Jean, and threw her arms about him. "You *are* willing to gamble a little on bringing Warrenville back to life, aren't you?"

"You and your mother are sweepin' me off my feet," he said, and his voice was a bit husky, his eyes a bit moist. "If we could see a crowd of people millin' around this town, if it was only for a day, I think I'd die happier."

"Some of those people are going to stay here for more than a day," Jean told him. "We can give away chances on lots with the rodeo tickets we sell.. And when some of the people who have been living out on the big, barren, windy prairie see this green valley, and the mountains looming up there against the sky, they're sure to stay!

Jean rushed on, borne by the ever-rising current of her own enthusiasm.

Jean was head over heels in work when a visitor rode into Warrenville. Kirk Dulane. He wanted to know if Forge Stafford and Cloudy Clark had stopped with the Warrens last night.

"No," said Jean. "Why?"

"I was supposed to see them," he answered. Then he changed the subject and asked if Jean's father had decided to sell him some of the vacant buildings in Warrenville.

"No," Jean answered.

"Can't you persuade him, for your own sake and mine, to do that much?" Kirk said, a bit irritably. "Do you want to hide your light under a bushel? Rot in this ghost town when you and I might be seeing life at its best?"

"You're not proposing to me, are you, Kirk?" Jean asked.

"Well, not right now, perhaps. But if we start traveling together, making the rodeos, that will be different."

His manner irked Jean a little.

"I won't be traveling anywhere for the next two weeks," she said. "I've got to help get Warrenville ready for a rodeo. A bigger and better one than Vail City put on!"

Kirk Dulane stared. "Are you crazy?" he blurted.

"Maybe," said Jean. "I'll know definitely within two weeks."

"Rodeo!" he hooted. "Good gosh! Wait till I tell Mr. Vail and Alberta about that! Rodeo in Warrenville. Great galloping ghosts!"

"If you want to get in touch with Forge," Jean said, further irked, "you can write him at Rocky Point. Right now I'm pretty busy, Kirk."

"Rodeo in Warrenville!" he repeated. "Expecting people to come to this grave yard!"

"You and the Vail tribe won't have to come," Jean snapped. "You can stay at home and hold Alberta's hand, if you're not as fed up on the Vails as you pretended to be. It's too bad you weren't holding her hand when she was trying to trick-ride a stolen horse. She certainly needed something to hang onto!"

Kirk Dulane flushed. "She's twice the horsewoman you are," he retorted. "And if you had been brave enough to compete against her, instead of sneaking around spying with a pair of field-glasses, you'd know it.

"She's a good enough horsewoman, but you're about the most changeable mule man I ever heard bray. That road right there will take you out of town. And soon, I hope."

Jean went back to her work. . . .

THE days that followed were the busiest that Jean had ever spent. There was much to be done. But the late May weather was neither too hot nor too cool for hard, outdoor work.

Then it was June the first—the second—the third. On the fourth, early in the morning, a gangling homesteader halted his wagon on the high, grassy bank of Boom Creek. He and his wife and four children got out and pitched their camp. As a reward for being the first comers, they were invited by Mrs. Warren, who had hired three women to open the old Trail Stop Restaurant temporarily,

to eat a free dinner at the noon hour.

"One wagon," said Sid Warren dubiously to Jean.

"It's only the morning of the fourth, Dad," said the girl, the optimistic lilt of her tone belying the dread that had come to her heart in the past several days.

At noon, there were only four wagons camped on the creek bank. Sid Warren was glum. Jean was becoming a little terrified. She had heard, although she hadn't told her parents, that Roger Vail was putting out adverse advertising about the Warrenville Rodeo, that he was ridiculing it, cautioning people to stay away.

Then, shortly after noon, Forge Stafford and Cloudy Clark breezed over the horizon with their bunch of rodeo stock.

"Oh, Forge!" Jean cried as she ran toward him. "Thank heaven you're here! But I'm scared. Scared!" And she told him about the absence of rodeo patrons.

"Listen to her, Cloudy," Forge said, a smile on the handsome face which no longer showed traces of the beating in Vail City.

Cloudy grinned. "Don't fret, Jeannie," he said. "But if you must, fret about how you're goin' to handle all the folks that are comin'. That are danged near here right now!"

"Cloudy's right," Forge said. "Gosh, but it's good to see you again, Jeannie! And look at how you've got the old town cleaned up. It is a pretty place, especially this time of year. I think maybe I'll settle down here when I get to be an old man of thirty-five or forty. I'll just fish up and down Boom Crick and . . . But fishin' don't look so good today." He pointed to the nearby stream.

"The water's roiled," Jean said. "The weather turned hot this morning. It's cutting the snow up in the mountains. Darn it! I wanted it to stay decently cool, anyway until after the rodeo."

"Hot weather and rodeos go together," Forge said. "Well, we're goin' to make this one a real rodeo, Jeannie. Cloudy and me picked up a few more horses and . . . Well, look comin' down the slope! A delegation from the county seat. Wagons, buckboards and even an old stagecoach!"

"Good!" Jeannie cried. "Gee! I've got forty things to do!"

"Get hold of yourself now," said Forge calmly. "Or, better still, let me get hold of you." He made as if to sweep the girl up into his saddle, but Jeannie was fleeing.

"See you later, my redheaded Romeo!" she called over her shoulder.

If Forge and Cloudy, experienced in the staging of rodeos, hadn't come to the assistance of the Warrens, things would have been in a mess. Too many people were arriving early. But Cloudy took charge of the livery barn, which Sid Warren had supplied with hay, and Forge hired a half-dozen of his rodeo acquaintances to help.

Toward evening two husky riders from Vail City appeared. They were "Moose" Carwyle and Orville Gleed, bartenders from Roger Vail's saloon. Immediately they began to advertise a big, free picnic in Vail City tomorrow. And a free rodeo, plus a big free dance that night.

"Listen at that," growled Forge who was talking with Jean, and trying to get her to take time off to practise up on her trick-riding. "Vail's sent those leather-lunged lizards up here to bait folks into pullin' out of Warrenville and goin' to Vail City."

"We can't let them do that!" Jean cried angrily.

"Not those two, anyhow," said Forge grimly. "They were in on that nose-bashin' party of mine in Vail City. Not that they're gettin' far. Listen to the folks booin' 'em!"

Forge departed swiftly. Two minutes later he and Cloudy Clark came dashing out of the livery barn on a pair of crack pick-up horses.

Those two horses thundered up to the mounts ridden by Carwyle and Gleed. Carwyle made a swipe at Forge with his quirt—and made a serious mistake. Forge had a quirt, too. So did Cloudy Clark. Leather began to cut the air. And about ten seconds later Gleed and Carwyle were being fogged out of town while the crowd cheered Forge and Cloudy who, emitting wild war-whoops, gave the Vail men a swift start homeward.

That impromptu event touched off a spark of excitement. The crowd became noisier. Campfires began to glow on the high bank of Boom Creek. A fiddle squeaked. Couples began to dance on the grassy turf.

SID WARREN threw open the doors of the old town hall and invited the dancers to go there. Tomorrow night, he said, a five-piece orchestra from Cedarton would be playing for a dance. But, until then —help yourselves, folks. Warrenville's all yours!

Jean was tired but happy when she went to bed about eleven o'clock on that warm

night. A hide buyer had paid her father fifty dollars for an option on the purchase of an old building that had once been a warehouse. And a saddle-maker, who had thought of moving to Vail City, thought he might locate in Warrenville instead, if there was any chance of the town's coming to permanent life again.

Shortly after dawn the following morning Jean was abruptly jolted into wakefulness by the explosion of a giant firecracker just outside her window. She bounded from her bed, slipped into her clothes and ran outdoors, to see Forge standing there with a broad grin on his face.

"Your pinto's saddled," he said. "Get him over to the grounds and go through your paces."

"Oh, gosh, Forge! I'm afraid I'll be too busy today to practice!"

"The rodeo was put on for two reasons—to revive Warrenville and to show you off to the public," he said firmly. "Now must I grab you and . . . Yeah, I think I must."

That's what Forge said. And did. His arms went around Jean. But before the tall man whisked the girl up to the back of a pinto horse, he kissed her full on the lips. And the glow that Jean knew in that moment eclipsed the glow of a red dawn flaming above the broken rim of the Tilt Rock Mountains.

"Maybe Kirk Dulane wouldn't like me doin' that," Forge said.

"Why don't you worry about whether or not I like it, you big, handsome red swan!" Jean countered.

"Red swan! I'll take you over my knee and paddle you."

But Jean was dashing away, heading toward the rodeo grounds. Forge, leaping to the back of a rangy little roan horse that Jean hadn't seen before, came thundering after her.

During breakfast at the Warren home, to which Forge and Cloudy had been invited, Sid Warren announced that he had rented the old saloon building across the street, one formerly occupied by Roger Vail, to a stranger named Vance Donahue, who wanted to sell souvenirs there today.

"Good," said Cloudy Clark. "Now I can buy Forge a Kewpie doll for his birthday."

"Birthday?" echoed Jean. "Why, I believe Forge did mention that the fifth of June was the day on which was hatched the handsome red—"

"You say red swan and I'll toss you into Boom Crick, even boomin' like it is this morning," Forge threatened.

"You didn't seem too provoked at Jeannie out in front of the house earlier this morning, Forge," observed Mrs. Warren, smiling.

"Oh, gosh!" Forge turned red. "Uh-pass the alkalied boot heels, Cloudy. Er—I mean, biscuits. Excuse me, Mrs. Warren. I didn't know I could be so flustered."

"You could be in love," suggested Mrs. Warren.

"You're darned right I could, if Jeannie would too."

"Jolt" Gerard, a husky bull-dogger who was helping Cloudy Clark at the barn, came in.

"That feller Donahue's here with a load of junk to put in the old saloon, Mr. Warren," he said. "He wants the keys."

"You bet," said Warren. "Here they are, Jolt. And much obliged for helpin' out while I'm gorgin' on these here nice alkalied boot heels."

"Sidney!" said Mrs. Warren sharply.

Sid Warren was less happy when, later, he found out that Donahue, the stranger, was unloading cases of whisky, along with a few souvenirs, over at the old saloon. Warren tried to stop him. Donahue contended that he had paid ten dollars rent for the building and that he hadn't stated what kind of souvenirs he had intended to sell.

Some thirsty bystanders urged Warren to let Donahue go ahead. After all, this was a celebration, wasn't it?

Sid Warren consented. But by noon he was sorry he had. Then he was furious. Roger Vail was in his old saloon. He and one of his bartenders, Moose Carwyle. Vail, having failed to pull the crowd away from Warrenville, was coming here to reap some profits. He had even brought a couple of poker tables along, and his gambler, "Deuce" Dulane.

Sid Warren went home to get his gun. He would run Vail out of town. But Jean and Mrs. Warren took the gun from Warren's trembling hands. They had been duped by Vail, they agreed, but there mustn't be any shooting. A celebration must not turn into tragedy.

"But that dirty coyote!" Warren stormed. "Havin' the gall to come back here right under my nose!"

"Hold your nose for the time being—and your temper," said his wife. "Please, Sid! For my sake!"

WARREN agreed, if reluctantly.

People continued their trek toward Warrenville. Forge, it seemed, had widely circulated the news about the Warrenville Rodeo. Crowds milled about the little town. Riders thundered up and down the street.

"I'm scared stiff." Jean said to Forge. "I feel like we've started an avalanche. Can we handle it?"

"We can handle an avalanche in each hand if we keep cool, calm—and collect at the gate," was his reply.

But it was hard for Jeannie to keep calm when Alberta Vail, mounted on her speedy horse, and accompanied by Kirk Dulane, rode into town.

"Must I grit my teeth and bear this?" Jean said to Forge. "Have we got to hand the first prize for the cowgirl's race over to her? That sorrel's faster than any horse around."

"Open competition," Forge said. "Come one, come all."

"That's right," said Jean, and gritted her teeth. "It's almost time for the parade, Forge."

"Let's go," he said.

Sid Warren wanted Forge to ride at Jean's side and head that parade. But Forge insisted upon Warren's taking that honor.

Riders were many. The calvacade was long and colorful. Pinto horses, bright-shirted cowboys. The setting was beautiful, the background of this old log-fronted town appropriate.

There was a mist in Jean's eyes as she tried to smile at her father. But there was a mist in his eyes, too.

"This is it, Jeannie!" he said. "This is the day!"

CHAPTER V
Ghost Town Rodeo

CHEERS from spectators lining the street. The awed gaping of children who had never before seen a parade. The creak of saddle leather, the jingle of spur rowels and the clop of prancing hoofs. And suddenly, unexpectedly, the blare of a band that Forge had hired in Rocky Point.

The cavalcade streamed on. As Jean and her father passed the old saloon. Roger Vail, who had tasted some of his own powerful wares, jeered:

"Sid Warren! The he-Cinderella for one day! Look at him, fellers! The ganted-up old ghost of Ghostville!"

"Easy, Dad!" Jean cautioned. "Don't let that yipping coyote ride you."

But Vail didn't yip any more just then. Forge Stafford, doing rope tricks as he rode a big bay horse, suddenly flipped the loop over Vail's shoulders and jerked him about twenty feet from where he had stood.

The crowd cheered. Vail got up, a bit dazed, and disappeared into the saloon.

"Thanks, Forge," Jean murmured.

By two o'clock the once ghostly grandstand was packed to overflowing. Chutes, long deserted, creaked under the strain of lunging broncs. Brightly-garbed men, wranglers and contestants, perched on the top rails like tropical birds.

The show was about to start. Jean, who had helped her father sell tickets, heard Forge say:

"Come on, Jeannie! You're ridin' in the cowgirl race that follows the bareback bronc ridin'."

"I can't, Forge."

"You're ridin' my roan horse, that new one I bought."

"But he can't run with Alberta Vail's sorrel."

"Scared of gettin' beat?" Forge taunted.

"No!" said Jean, and went out with him.

There were six entries in that race. One of them was Jean, tense on the rangy roan. Another was Alberta Vail, smug, cocksure on her pretty sorrel. A gun cracked and the sorrel bounded away, taking the lead in that half-mile contest.

"Come on, roan!" Jean begged entertainingly.

The field swept once around the track, and Jean was third when six thundering horses swept past the noisy grandstand that first round. But the roan forged ahead, crept into second place. And hope surged into Jean's heart, a heart that pounded harder and harder as the fleet, smooth-running roan cut down the sorrel's lead from three lengths to two.

"Come on, roan!" Jean was urging now.

Her pleas were answered. The roan was gaining on Miss Vail's sorrel. The roan's bridle was even with the sorrel's flaxen tail as the two leading riders swept around the turn that would bring them into the home stretch. Then the roan's nose was even with

Alberta Vail's stirrup.

The grandstand cut loose with cheers. The roan swept on into the home stretch and Jean caught the look of fear, of anger on Alberta Vail's set face.

Alberta began to whip her willing sorrel. But one blow of her flailing crop caught the gaining roan across the nose. The roan never faltered, though. Ears flattened, hoofs flying, he forged even with sorrel—and swept over the finish line a full length ahead. The stands went crazy.

"Good for you!" exulted Forge as Jean returned to the chutes. "I had a two-hundred-dollar bet on that race."

"And you didn't tell me?" gulped the startled girl.

"I knew you'd beat Miss Vail if you could. And I figgered the roan could do it. That's why I bought him."

The calf-roping event started. Fans cheered their favorite ropers. Sweat streamed down the faces of contestants on this unusually hot day. It poured down the face of Forge Stafford who, after the calf roping, put on a whirlwind trick-roping exhibition that brought the crowd to its feet—and a thrill to the heart of Jean Warren.

Then came the bull-dogging, a fast event with keen rivalry and plenty of speed. Things were moving at a fast pace today. But it wasn't all breath-taking competition. The crowd let down, had a big laugh when gangling Cloudy Clark, garbed in a silk plug hat and white spats, did a clown act, a travesty of a trick-riding act, on a sway-backed old mule. Laughing almost hysterically, the kids especially enjoyed it, and begged for an encore, with which Cloudy obliged.

The wild horse race was next. The saddling and riding of unbroken horses, a dozen of them, that bucked in every direction.

"You're up next, Jeannie," said Forge. "Go out there and show the crowd—and Alberta Vail—how a real trick-rider can ride that wingless Magpie! Ride like you did this morning!"

THE crowd was not too enthusiastic when Jean came out on her pinto. But when the pinto hit his even stride, and a fast one, and when Jean, whetted to a keen edge by long weeks of practise, started pulling her tricks out of the bag, the crowd broke into cheers. Cheers that swelled with each succeeding, skillfully executed maneuver.

The pinto picked up speed. So did his rider whose timing was faultless, whose heart was game, and whose duty, Jean thought, was to give the finest exhibition possible to the people who were so loyally supporting a ghost town rodeo.

It was nearing the end of the act. The pinto, at Jean's signal, was on a dead run. Then came, in rapid succession, one—two—three tricks, dangerous stunts that brought the crowd roaring to its feet. Jean wondered if she were dreaming again. Dreaming, as she had so often, that real people were sitting up there in those stands.

No! This was the real thing. Rodeo contestants, men in the know, were cheering Jean as wildly as the spectators. It was a tribute that brought tears to her eyes.

But Forge was not loudly enthusiastic.

"You shouldn't have risked that last trick, Jeannie," he said, his voice a bit husky. "You might've broken your neck and my heart all at one fell swoop."

The bucking contest was on. Horses twisting out of the chutes, hoofs jarring the earth, riders tumbling to the earth or scratching till the gun cracked, and winning applause. And Jean praying that no one would be hurt.

The show was almost over when Kirk Dulane came galloping into the arena with startling news. Boom Creek was rising sharply, as it had in the past, and he asked the audience to go down to Vail City and help fleeing citizens salvage what they could.

"Dad was right!" Jean said to Forge. "He said that some day that would happen. Let's go and help, do what we can!"

Another chapter of excitement began. Riders and wagons headed for Vail City where already an elderly woman and two children had been drowned. And still Boom Creek, fed by rapidly melting snows in the Tilt Rock Mountains, boomed higher and higher. . . .

Dusk that evening found the citizens of Vail City being hauled, with their household goods, into Warrenville which was, and would continue to be, high and dry because of its location. Kirk Dulane was giving away Vail's whisky stock.

"Help yourselves, boys!" Dulane yelled, a little drunk himself. "Here, Jean! Give this bottle to the handsome red swan with you there!"

Forge moved toward Dulane.

"So the hired henchman's bein' free with the boss's panther sweat, is he?" he said. "The same henchman who was goin' to haul some wrecked log buildings out of the country. But he'd already taken orders to sell those buildings in Vail City."

"That's a lie, Stafford!" Dulane said sullenly.

"It isn't a lie," Jean cut in. "We found out some things down there at what *was* Vail City. Found them out from grateful people we helped this afternoon. One of those people, Sam Lockridge, told me you'd stolen my pinto out of the pasture one night. And you told Alberta Vail that you'd 'romanced' me into lending her the horse!"

"I did romance you, too," Dulane sneered. "I had you believing I was going into the rodeo game and make you a star trick rider!"

"She is a star trick rider," Forge said grimly.

"You're darned right she is!" whooped a bystander, while a hundred others agreed with him.

"All right," Dulane said. "Now, float out of my way, you handsome red swan, while I get busy."

Forge slapped Kirk Dulane. Kirk pumped a savage blow at Forge's red head—and the battle was on! And what a battle. Dulane was husky, quick and just drunk enough to be courageous. He fought fiercely for a minute or two. But Forge, a red swan who had turned eagle, wouldn't be stopped by that first barrage of swift, jolting blows he was forced to absorb.

He battled as if he loved it. And certainly the spectators did! This was no ordinary, spontaneous street brawl in a celebrating town. It was a grudge fight.

Forge pumped a blow to Dulane's midsection, then clipped Dulane with a short left hook to the face, following that with a stiff punch to the mouth. Dulane's head snapped back. Another punch to the mouth made him reel.

He tried to rally, but Forge was stabbing out with quick, punishing blows. Dulane rushed, missed a furious punch, and took one on the nose. He began to reel. It was a haymaker to the jaw that floored him, while the crowd cheered Forge.

GRAY, brawny Tom Bradley, the old blacksmith who had just lost his shop in Vail City, and who had once worked for Forge's father, moved forward.

"Did Kirk Dulane ever give you and Cloudy the half of your money that Vail held back on you for that rodeo in Vail City?" he asked.

"Gosh, no!" Forge replied. "I thought we'd never collect that without a lawsuit."

"Some of us fellers cornered Vail," Bradley went on. "We told him he'd better kick through with what he owed you. He said he would. And, right in front of us, he give some money to Kirk Dulane and told him to overtake you and Cloudy."

"Now I know why Dulane was looking for you, Forge," put in Jean. "I told him to write you at Rocky Point, but apparently he kept the money himself and didn't look for you further."

"He won't keep it," growled old Tom Bradley. "Me and Jim and Ed here'll be waitin' for him when he wakes up!" The old blacksmith was grim. He would collect, all right.

The dance that night was late in starting. It was preceded by the drawing of numbers in which twenty lots in Warrenville were to be given away.

"I'm the barber over at Rocky Point, folks!" the first winner yelled. "Some day soon I'm movin' my shop to Warrenville, the prettiest spot on the whole range. But this lot I've just won—it's goin' to the McVey family that was washed out of Vail City before that town was floated off the map this afternoon. Mr. McVey, here you are!"

The crowd applauded. And every winner thereafter donated his free lot to some unfortunate family from Vail City. Then, at Jean's request, Sid Warren donated more free lots to unfortunate families who declared they would never again reside in such a flood trap as Vail City had proved to be.

"Warrenville's goin' to live again, Jeannie," said Forge who was dancing with the dark-eyed girl who inspired the worship of his steady gaze.

She nodded. "No wonder Mom and Dad are dancing over there like a couple of kids," she said. "Oh, I'm happy, Forge! Not because Vail City was wiped off the map, but because we had refuge to offer those people who had believed Vail's lies, that high water would never hurt his town."

"His town's gone now," said Forge. "So is he—and so is his daughter. I'd hoped you might say you were happy because you're in my arms and floatin' around . . . Darn that word, float! It reminds me of red swan!"

"Where do you go next," Jeannie asked.

"Range Center. And you're goin' with me. Jeannie, they've got an awful good marryin' preacher over there, they say. I was wonderin', hopin', that an ordinary trick-roper and a cute little star trick-rider, who's as beautiful as she is darin', would need him."

"Shall we go outdoors for a while, Forge?"

"We'd better. Something in your eyes tells me I'm goin' to start soarin' up to the clouds in a few minutes. But if you say red swans can't fly, I'll twist your cute little ears into leather buttons."

They went outdoors, strolled toward the porch of the Warren home. They were there when Forge blurted:

"This suspense is terrifyin' me, Jeannie. Will you—uh—won't you—uh—"

"I'll be back in a jiffy, Forge," she said, and darted into the house.

Soon she was back, and handing him a beautiful gold watch.

"This is your birthday, isn't it?" she said laughing.

"Sure. But gosh, I didn't want you to do anything like this!"

"I got it over at Cedarton last week," she said. "You might find something of interest engraved inside the case."

Opening that shining case, the tall man read:

To Forge, the man I love

"Oh, gosh, Jeannie!" he choked. "Love! Then you will marry me?"

"Yes, Forge." The lilt of a lark was in her voice, and her eyes were starry bright. "But, gee, I didn't dare give you that watch, let you see that engraving until I knew you were going to propose."

Again his arms were about her, and she was thrilling to the pressure of his lips. Her eyes, glistening with tears of joy, looked up at the stars.

"There's one star you don't see up there," said Forge huskily. "A star trick-rider. She's down here in my arms."

Ahead, strange towns, life and excitement—and love. A dream coming true. And next fall, after the rodeo season, she and Forge would come back home, back to a town that would be thriving again.

When a gigantic rustling conspiracy threatens the range, Julia Milton of the Running M Ranch braves desperate peril to set things right—while love and happiness beckon her in HER HEART RIDES HOME, a complete novelet by LEE BOND featured in the November issue of our fascinating companion magazine—

THRILLING RANCH STORIES

NOW ON SALE—15c PER COPY AT ALL NEWSSTANDS!

I'm Back in the Saddle Again

By GENE AUTRY

World-Famous Rodeo, Radio and Movie Star

I AM one of the hundreds of thousands of Americans who can never get enough of rodeos. To me, rodeos have always topped all other sports. Sure, I go for baseball, football, boxing and athletics generally, and I enjoy all of them. But, as the saying goes, I can take them or leave them alone. I simply cannot leave rodeo alone.

Gene can twirl 'em

As you may know, before I joined the Army Air Corps early in 1942, I used to appear with several rodeos each year. I played the rodeo at Madison Square Garden, New York, in 1940 and 1941, and I was scheduled to appear with it also in 1942. Being in uniform, I could not appear professionally. Still, I could not stay away and I was fortunate enough to be able to arrange a furlough so that I could attend the opening.

It took a lot of planning, but between my flights to almost every part of the world, I have managed, each year since, to get back for at least one or two days of the Madison Square Garden Rodeo.

Now I am out of uniform, "back in the saddle again," and you can depend upon it that I'll be seeing rodeos from Texas to Canada this year.

My Early Life

I suppose I come by my interest in rodeos naturally. I was born in Tioga, Texas, which is real cattle country and I have been around horses and steers as long as I can remember. A few years later, our family moved from Tioga to a ranch near Ravia, Oklahoma, just across the Red River, and I lived on ranches until I was sixteeen years old.

While these early years undoubtedly made me the enthusiastic rodeo fan that I am, they also provided me with training and background for my later work in motion pictures, on the stage, and in radio. My father was a cattle buyer, and I began to play at being a cowboy when I was still so small that I had to be lifted onto a small pony.

I don't know how far back a person can remember, but I do know that I can't remember the time when I did not ride. I can recall a good deal about Tioga, even though I was only three years old when we moved away,

Gene Autry "back in the saddle again"

so you see, I got an early start in the saddle, for I remember riding there. In fact, I can remember vividly that my first mount was a beautiful brown Shetland pony, and I complained to my father that I wanted a real, big horse like the other waddies.

Life on a Ranch

It was not long before I had that *real big* horse, and it was not long, either, before I helped to brand calves and take my turn at other chores on the ranch. Like all kids, I suppose I must have been a terrible nuisance at first, for I was much too young to do anything but get in the way. It's an old saying, and it's true, that experience is the best teacher, and I learned what I know of ranch life through experience.

The outdoor life was healthy. I grew fast. At twelve, I was strong enough to do a man's work; and, when I wasn't busy at school, I did it.

Fortunately, my father appreciated the importance of an education, at least an elementary education, and he chased me off to the little one-room schoolhouse many a time when I would much rather have been line-riding with the men.

A Button Sings

While I was learning what I know of the West from my father, my grandfather was doing his part towards making me a singing cowboy. However, I am sure Grandfather never expected that years later his little choir boy would become the screen's first singing cowboy; but I'm getting a little ahead of the story.

Grandpa was a minister, and very proud of his church choir. He deserved full credit for

Arena, and He Tells His Own True Story Here!

whatever it accomplished. He coached the choir as a unit, and he coached the singers individually. Probably, because I was most always within reach, Grandpa devoted more time to me than to any of the other singers; Grandpa always said it was because I needed more time than any of the others. But whatever the reason, I shall always be grateful to him for whatever singing ability I may have.

Even if Grandpa was right and I did need more time than any of the other singers in his choir, I always liked to sing, and I sang whenever I got a chance. I'd sing for an audience, or I'd sing for myself, when I was riding back and forth between the ranch and school; and either way I enjoyed it just as much as I do today.

When I was sixteen years old, I made my debut as a professional singer. It wasn't a very auspicious beginning, I can tell you, but I suppose it gave me a liking for show-business that I have had ever since. Early in my sixteenth summer, right after school vacation started, a medicine show went through Ravia. I say "went through" advisedly, for that is exactly what it did, played one show on the main street, packed up, and drove right on to the next town.

I packed up and went along with the show. I didn't think my father was too well pleased with the idea, but he gave me his permission when I promised to return for the new school term. I enjoyed the show, but I have never worked harder at any job in my life. When actors tell me about the grind of one-night stands, I am inclined to laugh as I think back to that summer. For us, a one-night stand would have been a long engagement. How many towns we played in any one day depended merely on the mileage between places.

From Railroads to Radio

In September I quit the show and returned to Ravia and to school. I hadn't had a Guild or Equity contract with the show so I arrived home with just enough money for my two-months' work to buy a guitar. I bought the guitar, and I was soon able to accompany my singing, at least to my own satisfaction.

As a youngster, I was fascinated by railroads so when I was eighteen years old I looked for a railroading job. I started at the bottom with the Frisco Railroad in Sapulpa, Oklahoma, and it was my ambition to become a train dispatcher or yard master. Some months later, I did become a telegraph operator and that was as far as I ever did climb in my railroading career.

Work came in fits and starts with the railroad. I whiled away my idle time with my guitar and my songs. Jimmy Long, another singing railroader, and I became fast friends, and we often spent hours playing and singing together. Song writing is only one step away from singing, so Jimmy and I took that next step together. We wrote a lot of songs, some good I hope, and others that we have both forgotten.

There is one of our songs, however, that I will never forget: "That Silver Haired Daddy Of Mine." I have written more songs than I can count since then, but I think that "Silver Haired Daddy" will always be my favorite.

After my first telegrapher's job, I continued as an operator throughout Missouri and southern Oklahoma for several months. Finally, I was sent to Chelsea, Oklahoma. Telegraph messages were few and far between in Chelsea, and I had plenty of time for my guitar. One evening I was so absorbed in my song that I failed to notice a tall, rangey stranger who had come in to send a message.

The Stranger's Request

I was surprised and embarrassed, when I finished my song and saw him there, smiling down at me. Before I had a chance to apologize, he asked me, in a slow drawl, whether I knew "Home On The Range." After I had sung it for him, he asked me to sing "Casey Jones." Before he left, he told me he thought there might be a place for me in radio and advised me to go to New York.

When he left, I picked up the telegram I was to send for him, and, to my amazement, I saw that it was signed: *Will Rogers.* I sincerely hope I sent his telegram that cold December night; frankly, I don't remember.

New York did not agree with Will Rogers. I made the rounds of radio stations and phonograph companies, but I was only one among the many from all over the land who were doomed to disappointment. One man, however, was helpful.

"Go back home," he told me, "and get your start on a small radio station. If you've got what it takes, you'll make the big time; and, if you haven't, it won't be such a long walk home."

Starting From the Bottom

I took his advice and I soon had my own program on KVOO, Tulsa, Oklahoma, where they billed me as "Oklahoma's Singing Cowboy." The folks out that way seemed to like my style of singing, probably because it was their own style of singing, and the program stayed on. A year later, I returned to New York, but this time, I had a contract to make one record, "That Silver Haired Daddy Of Mine."

Folks east and west must have liked the song, for more than a million records were sold. That was my real start, and it paid big dividends in more ways than one. First, of course, there were the royalties on the record, second, and more important, I received a number of big-time radio offers. Finally, I signed a contract with WLS, Chicago.

Chicago, of course, was big-time. Located more or less in the center of many good-sized towns, it gave me an opportunity to make personal appearances between my radio programs. It was on one of these personal appearance tours that I met Smiley Burnette.

The accordion player in my own little band was ill and couldn't accompany me on one of our engagements. Somebody recommended Smiley.

I found him in a town you never heard of, Tuscola, Illinois. He had a job on the local radio station; it was practically a one-man station, and Smiley was that man. He wrote, he announced, he sang, and he played. That really should be *Played,* with a capital *P,* for Smiley can play every instrument in the band.

If I remember correctly, Smiley told me he was getting fourteen dollars a week and free gasoline. It seemed that there was a filling station directly across the road from the radio station, and the proprietor supplied Smiley's gasoline and oil for frequent "commercials" on the air.

Smiley joined my act, and he remained with me for ten years. Then I left him—to go in the army. No man has ever had a finer friend than Smiley Burnette and I am sure I don't have to tell any motion picture fan that the screen has never had a more talented or more versatile entertainer. Smiley Burnette will always be No. 1 in my book.

Crashing Hollywood

When I was a kid in Oklahoma, William S. Hart, Tom Mix, and Buck Jones were my screen heroes. Ken Maynard was one of my favorites, too, but Ken came a little later than the others. They were all of one ilk, hard-riding, straight-shooting, two-fisted fighting men. As a youngster, I enjoyed identifying myself with each of them as I watched them on the screen.

But when I grew up, when I was doing personal appearances around Chicago and appearing weekly on the National Barn Dance program, the idea of working in motion pictures never occurred to me. I suppose by this time I had begun to think of myself as a singer, and the idea of a singing cowboy on the screen had never suggested itself to me —or, apparently, to any one else.

Then, in 1935, Nat Levine, who was known to Hollywood as The Serial King, invited me to appear in a fifteen-episode serial, "The Phantom Empire." I think the fact that Ken Maynard, one of my old favorites, was the star of the Mascot lot had something to do with my taking the assignment. Anyway, I went to Hollywood, and Smiley Burnette went with me.

Smiley and I didn't like "The Phantom Empire" when we saw it, though we had had a lot of fun making it, and we packed up and headed for Chicago.

Then Nat Levine's Mascot Pictures Corporation joined forces with several other independent producing companies to form Republic Pictures Corporation. I joined Republic as the company's first star, and I remained with the company until I joined the army in 1942.

We were all very hopeful, but I must confess that we were all very doubtful, too, when we got together at the old Mack Sennett Studios to discuss the plans for my first series of eight pictures. The optimistic note seemed to be that the public had accepted me in radio as a singer and so would likely accept me in the same role on the screen. The doubts naturally arose from the fact that there had never been a Musical Western picture. I, for one, wondered whether songs that must necessarily stop the action had any place in cowboy movies.

At any rate, the optimists had their way. Herb (Herbert J.) Yates, head of the new Republic company, was willing to speculate, and we made the first Musical Western in screen history. The rest is history, too. The public liked the new western format, so different from the Tom Mix and Bill Hart thrillers, and we made seven more pictures

of the same type during the 1935-1936 season.

Smiley appeared in all eight pictures with me; we were the two happiest men in the world. At the end of the year, I was slightly stunned by being voted the top box-office star of Western pictures in a national exhibitors' poll; but I can't get over the notion that it was the introduction of a new kind of Western picture, rather than my own work, that brought me that great honor.

To-day, musical westerns are the rule, rather than the exception. My own studios, Republic, will make four groups of western pictures this season; three of the series are musical, and only one is straight action. Roughly, the same ratio prevails with all the other studios that produce Westerns. It certainly does look as though we started something way back in 1935.

After my first year in Hollywood, I managed to work out a production schedule that gave me time for personal appearances, with rodeos and in motion picture theatres. Smiley accompanied me on many of my tours. But if Smiley wasn't able to be with me on every trip, I had a new friend by this time who was always with me. You know him as Champion: believe me, no horse was ever better named.

A "High School Horse"

Champ is the finest horse I have ever had—the finest horse I have ever seen. I am not thinking about horse-show points, formal gaits, and jumping, though Champ could hold his own with the best of them on that score, too. I am thinking about loyalty, intelligence, and understanding. Doing his act in the rodeo arena or taking me over the hills in a motion picture, he seems to anticipate my every wish; and he has never once let me down.

Champ is what the show-business calls a "high school horse." In other words, he has been taught countless tricks, so many tricks, in fact, that there isn't time to put him through them all in one performance. Tricks, of course, can be taught to almost any horse by a competent trainer; it is a matter of patience and understanding. But Champion's intelligence goes much further than mere tricks. He really seems to understand every word I say to him; and he has his own ways of showing what he would like to be able to say to me.

Champ has been with me in every picture I have ever made. We've ridden on trains, planes, ships, and trucks together. He is billed on the motion picture screen like any motion picture star, and my contract provides that he must get at least one close-up in every picture. About the time this little piece reaches the newsstands, Champ will be with me again at the Madison Square Garden Rodeo. Champ will have a brand new act this year, and I think it will surprise you.

Globe Trotting

Motion pictures, personal appearances, phonograph records, and occasional radio engagements kept me busy for the next several years. By 1939, I had visited every last corner of the United States, much of Mexico, and parts of Canada. But, try as I might, I had never been able to set up a schedule that would give me enough time between pictures to go abroad.

Early in 1939, I finally got my chance to go to Europe. Champ and I spent two months touring Ireland and England. I was charmed with the country and the people. Western pictures are distinctly American, of course, so I was surprised and delighted with the cordial welcome I received. I don't think I ever saw so many people at one time in my life as the crowd that greeted us in Dublin. The police estimated it as 750,000, but that's a little too high for my mathematics.

As long as I live, I shall never forget the day we left Ireland. We stood on deck, waving good-bye to the crowd on the dock, and something caught in my throat when they began to sing, "Come Back To Erin." I did go back, too, during the war, when I was flying a transport for Uncle Sam.

After most enjoyable weeks in "staid" old London, which wasn't too staid to admit Champ inside the portals of the Savoy Plaza Hotel, we sailed for home, just as war was about to engulf first Europe, then the world. London, through our last days there, was a grim city, preparing for the conflict. We were on the high seas when the German blitz started.

In 1940, I made my first appearance with the Madison Square Garden Rodeo. Business was good, and I was pleased because the large attendance seemed to break down an old motion picture idea that the big cities were not interested in Western movies or Western screen stars.

In fact it was the success of this Madison

Square Garden engagement that helped pave the way for the showing of my pictures in the first-run theatres of many of the larger cities. Until that time, exhibitors seemed to think that Western pictures were largely for youngsters, and many theatres restricted their showings to Saturday and Sunday afternoons.

It had always seemed to me that Western pictures, being real American entertainment, were good acceptable entertainment for all Americans. I have since been proved right. America's reading habits have certainly indicated that western stories are good adult entertainment. The adult circulation of such fine publications as RODEO ROMANCES, THRILLING RANCH STORIES, WEST, and THRILLING WESTERN have proved that.

After my second appearance at the Madison Square Garden Rodeo in 1941, I decided to organize my own rodeo. For the next several months, I was hopping planes out of Hollywood every week-end in my hunt for stock, horses, steers, and bulls.

We set up headquarters at Ardmore, Oklahoma, and the first thing we knew, the good people there up and changed the name of a

[*Turn page*]

Skip the mink...
get some
6NX APPEAL
6NX APPEAL IS CHEEK APPEAL
— quick way to be a smoothie! Only Star Double Edge Blades, made by the secret 6NX Process, deliver 6NX shaves. Keen, long lasting Stars make your double edge razor perform miracles!
SINGLE EDGE RAZORS need Star Single Edge Blades! Billions of shaves — by millions of men — have proved them!
DOUBLE EDGE
4 for 10¢
MADE BY 6NX PROCESS
STAR
DOUBLE EDGE BLADES
STAR
Famous Since 1880
SINGLE EDGE
4 for 10¢
Single Edge
STAR
BLADES
STAR
STAR BLADES
STAR DIVISION, AMERICAN SAFETY RAZOR CORP., BROOKLYN 1, N. Y.

town to Gene Autry. I thanked them then; and I want to take this opportunity to tell them again publicly how grateful I am.

Uncle Sam Beckons

In early 1942, I took my rodeo on the road for several engagements in the East, planning to follow up with appearances in the West later in the year. Instead, I cut my eastern tour short, and Champ and I flew back to California as I decided to enlist in the Army.

This was Champ's second cross-country flight; he had flown east with me the year before for the Madison Square Garden Rodeo. Champ, by the way, was the only horse ever to make a cross-country flight in a chartered plane.

I spent three years in the Army. I had always been a flying enthusiast, and I wanted to fly for the Army. Uncle Sam had other plans, however, and I divided my first year in service between Public Relations and Special Services. I kept trying for a transfer, and I was finally assigned to ground school. In 1944, I got my WINGS: they looked that big to me.

As a pilot for the Air Transport Command, I really did see the world. But I saw a sad world, a suffering world, torn by the worst slaughter and destruction this planet has ever known. I hope to go back again one day to all those once beautiful places so that I may enjoy them as they were meant to be.

India, Africa, the Middle East were among my destinations. I've been over the Hump to China. Every minute of it was tense and thrilling, but I am glad it is over; and I hope, with all the world, that peace has come to stay and that no one, ever again, will have to fly a mission of death.

I was released from the Army last year. I had a chance then, that was denied me when I was in the service, to tour the islands of the South Pacific with a USO entertainment unit. We spent ten weeks on that trip. If the boys enjoyed our visits with them as much as we did, they had a swell time. I think they did.

Now, as I said at the beginning of this piece, "I'm Back In The Saddle Again." Right after I came back from that USO tour, I started to pick up where I had left off three years before.

First of all, Mr. Wrigley put me right back on the air in my Sunday afternoon radio show, "Melody Ranch." I suppose you know that I call my home "Melody Ranch," and that "Melody Ranch" was the title of one of my favorite pictures.

That Sunday afternoon air was awfully crowded when we were ready to start "Melody Ranch" again, and, though we didn't like it, we had to settle for fifteen minutes. Now, we are definitely scheduled to go back on a half-hour Sunday schedule before the end of the Summer.

Before you have read this, I will have finished "Sioux City Sue," my first post-war picture at Republic. I have a few new ideas for my new productions, and I hope you'll like them. I could tell you about them here, I suppose, but I have a feeling that it would be better if you saw them on the screen.

As I am writing this, Champ and I are on our way back to Hollywood. We've been east about a month with Rodeos in Washington, Cleveland, Toronto, and Pittsburgh. Now, as you are reading this, we'll be east again for rodeos in New York and Boston.

Meantime, there'll be pictures and flying. The Army has not lessened my interest in aviation. If anything, I am more of an enthusiast now than ever. Judge for yourself. I just bought a beautiful twin-engine job and I never owned my own plane before the war.

The Flying-A Mark

Before I went into the Army, I arranged to combine my own rodeo with that of the World's Championship Rodeo Corporation, and I am now a partner in that enterprise with Everett Colburn and the Clemens brothers of Florence, Arizona. That explains why you might have noticed my Flying-A mark on some of the gear in the big shows during the last three years.

Everett Colburn is the real active boss of the show, and a finer fellow or a better rodeo producer never lived. That's the reason why the rest of us are so glad to leave all the details to him for we know that with Everett in the saddle, we'll be sure to get a perfect ride.

But, it isn't because I have an interest in the corporation that you'll see me on the side-lines at every performance when the show comes east this year. I can't resist rodeos, mine or anybody else's. There's a spine-tingling thrill in every event. For me, the top numbers are the bucking broncos, saddle or bare-back, for the fastest action in the fastest show on earth.

I am proud to be so closely associated with rodeos; and I am proud to have this opportunity to have my say in RODEO ROMANCES.

Contest of Hearts

By SALLY DE VRIES

The rodeo arena provides the key to Letty Carter's problem when she must choose between Buck Arnold and Jim Danceford!

LETTY CARTER'S heart was pounding with excitement as she checked the double cinches, then swung into the special-rigged trick riding saddle on her beautiful bay horse, Ginger. The voice of the announcer boomed through the arena as Letty rode out to take her place with the other girls entered in the event.

"Girls' trick riding contest!" came through the microphones. "The finals in this event—winner to receive the five-hundred-dollar prize money. Here they are, folks! The girl in white mounted on the pinto is Sue Lake, of the Bar L. In brown, and riding the sorrel is Nancy Kenny, of the Circle K. Bess Forester, in green on the palomino, and last, but not least, Letty Carter in tan on the bay. Let's go, girls!"

The voice ceased and the band began to play. The four girls separated, each going through her trick riding routine as her horse moved at a brisk pace.

As Letty hooked one knee around the saddle-horn and released the reins so that she was hanging head downward, she was thinking eagerly that this was one of the most important events in her whole life. She was smiling as she swung gracefully back up into the saddle while Ginger wheeled and galloped back in the direction from which they had started.

Letty scrambled up on her saddle, standing erect on it, the reins in her right hand. She knew that somewhere in that sea of faces all about her "Buck" Arnold and Jim Danceford were watching every move that she made, and it added to her happiness.

She remembered what Buck, a lean, red-headed waddy who was always smiling and gay, and who stood a good chance of winning the events that would make him Champion All Around Cowboy, had said to her just before the rodeo had started.

"You've got to win the trick ridin' event, Letty. You will—I know it." Then his gay grin had been for her. "Always did like a girl with plenty of spunk—and you've got it."

"I'll win, Buck," Letty had said, with a confident smile. "Don't worry about that."

As she swung her slender figure to one side of the horse, then to the other, her thoughts switched to Jim Danceford. He was tall and dark, and didn't say much, but she was sure that he was in love with her, just as was Buck.

She thought a lot of both of them. Both wanted to marry her, but each time either had mentioned that she had merely laughed and said to wait until the rodeo finals were over. She would make up her mind then.

BUT she would have to do that before long now. The trick riding contest was the last event in which she was entered—and still she didn't know her own mind, or

which of the two she really loved. There had been times during the past week when she had thought that she adored Buck. It was so much fun being with him, and they had had such good times together after the show.

Yet Jim was nice, too. There was something in his attitude toward her that made her feel she was very precious to him. He was always kind and considerate, though perhaps not as exciting as Buck.

"Hope you win, Letty," Jim had said when she had seen him before the contest. "But be careful. Some of those tricks you do are right dangerous." He had frowned uneasily. "Wouldn't want you to get hurt."

"Don't let that bother you, Jim," Letty had told him angrily. "I won't take too many chances."

Ginger was going at a gallop now, as Letty decided to do her most dangerous trick. She slid down on the right side of the horse and clung to the safety strap as she worked her way under Ginger's body. There was constant danger of her being struck by the horse's flashing hoofs. The slightest slip and she would fall beneath her mount.

She made it safely though, and breathed a sigh of relief as she came up on the other side of the horse and swung into saddle. A roar of approval came from the crowd.

When the whistle blew to indicate that the contest was over, the four girl trick riders halted their mounts to wait for the decision of the judges. All of them were anxious.

"Final results in the trick riding contest for girls!" came the voice of the announcer. "First—Letty Carter! Second—Nancy Kenny! Third—Sue Lake! Fourth—Bess Forester."

Letty let out a whoop of delight. Cheers went up from the spectators, as she rode Ginger forward and made him rear up as she took off her hat and waved to the crowd. Then she and the rest of the girls rode out of the arena.

Buck met her after she had turned her busy horse over to one of the men to be taken care of. The red-headed bronco buster was smiling delightedly as he greeted her.

"Best trick riding I ever saw, Letty!" he said enthusiastically. "I sure admire a girl who has nerve like that." He grinned at her. "But you had me worried when you did that trick where you go under the horse. Was afraid you might slip and lose the contest."

Letty just smiled, and quickly found an excuse to leave him. It was strange, but disappointment had swept over her at Buck's attitude. He admired her skill, but her safety didn't seem to matter.

She wandered out at the side of the arena where a lot of the rodeo performers were watching a wild bull riding contest that was now going on. Jim Danceford, standing some distance away, smiled and moved toward her. Letty glanced over her shoulder and saw that Buck was also approaching.

"Look out!" suddenly shouted a cowboy standing near her. "That bull just threw his rider and he's coming this way!"

Everybody around dashed for safety as the bull charged toward them. Letty turned to run, too, but her foot slipped and she went down. She tried to get up but couldn't, because she had twisted her ankle.

She caught a glimpse of Buck swinging over the arena fence, on his way to safety. Then a man lunged forward, caught the bull by the horns and gave a twist that sent the animal to the ground in a cloud of dust. Jim Danceford!

Pick-up men quickly rode in and caught the bull as Jim leaped away from the animal. Jim reached to Letty and picked her up tenderly in his strong arms.

"I near died when I saw you might be hurt, darling," he whispered, his voice unsteady. "Don't you know better than to scare a man to death like that twice in one day?"

"Twice?" demanded Letty in surprise as he set her down. He had carried her out of the arena and they were alone in a passageway. "What do you mean, Jim?"

"Why, when you were doing your trick riding and were underneath your horse," he said. "I was so afraid you might slip and get hurt I couldn't breathe."

"That mattered more to you than my winning the contest?" Letty asked softly.

"It sure did," he assured her finally. "Keeping you safe from harm is all that would ever matter to me, Letty."

As she looked at him, and saw the light in his eyes, there was no longer the slightest doubt in Letty's mind that here was the man she really loved, and with all her heart.

"I told you I would decide about marrying you when the rodeo was over, Jim," she said, her eyes shining. "So I think you had better kiss the bride! I—I—"

But his kiss stopped her from saying anything further, and Letty thought that a nice idea.

Arena Highlights by FOGHORN CLANCY

AMERICA'S MOST FAMOUS RODEO EXPERT

EDDIE WOODS WINS THE BRONC RIDING CROWN

EDDIE WOODS never did claim to be a stalwart son of the West, but he was certainly a great little cowhand when he was following the rodeos. He was a champion bronc rider who could compete with the best of them—and win—in spite of the fact that he was only five feet, six inches tall, and weighed barely a hundred and forty.

He won the Northwest Championship in bronc riding at the Calgary, Canada, Stampede in 1928, he won the amateur bronc riding championship at Cheyenne Frontier Days

in 1930, and he won his share of the prize money at the rodeo in England in 1934. He might have gone on winning, year after year, when he had garnered in all those honors, except that—well there was a girl.

Her name was Virginia Brown, and she came from New Hampshire, where the Brown name has long been an honored one in the textile industry. Eddie met the lovely brown-haired, gray-eyed Virginia in Montreal—only a casual meeting, it would have seemed, but those few moments were long enough for Eddie Woods to fall completely in love.

The two seemed destined for one another, though, for after that they met in the most unexpected corners of the world—once, for instance, when he was competing in a rodeo in Australia. He was sure that the reason he won in the bronc riding then was because Virginia was rooting for him.

Again they parted, though, but when Eddie met Virginia in Tucson, Arizona, two years later, he decided that things had gone far enough. He must do something about them. He did—plenty. He won the bull riding contest this time, and—won a bride.

Three months later they were married, and Virginia promptly let it be known that she didn't want a crippled-up husband. She wanted Eddie to quit the arena and go into the textile business.

As much as Eddie was in love, he balked for a time. It wasn't that he hadn't had enough of the rough and tough life of a bronc-riding cowboy, or wasn't intrigued by visions of a quiet family life in the beautiful hills of New Hampshire, but he didn't want to quit leaving some unfinished business.

"Honey," he told his wife, "I promised myself the day I won the amateur championship at the great Frontier Days in Cheyenne, Wyoming, that before I quit the arena for good I'd go back there and win the professional bronc riding crown. I've just got to do it."

Virginia understood. "Then we'll make a bargain," she told him. "I'll go with you and help you all I can—you'll win, of course—if you'll come back to New Hampshire with me then and settle down doing what I want you to do."

"You're on, honey," Eddie said. "And sure I'll win—for you." But he was not at all so sure himself, knowing that he would have to compete that year of 1937 with bronc riders of the class of "Hub" Whiteman, Hugh Strickland, Earl Thode, Burrel Mulkey, and scores of other tophands and champions who were contesting at Cheyenne.

When Eddie and his wife arrived in Cheyenne, Eddie entered only the bronc riding,

wanting to put all his energy into winning that crown. For five days the battle was on. Two buckers Eddie drew were below the average, one was fair, and one was so tough it was all Eddie could do to stay in the saddle.

On the final day he was in fifth place on points, and it looked as if he didn't have a chance. But Virginia never lost confidence, and spurred him on. He was sure to win, she said, for her heart was riding with him.

"It's now or never!" Eddie told himself as the chute swung open on that final ride.

The horse he had drawn, Geronimo, was a sunfishing cayuse that had dumped many a good rider, but against him Eddie Woods pitted all he had in science, skill, courage and riding ability in a grueling battle of man against brute force and the animal cunning of an outlaw bucker. People who attend the Frontier Days in Cheyenne are used to great riders, and expect them, but that ride of Eddie's was good enough to bring the vast audience to their feet. And to bring thunderous applause when Eddie was announced winner. Though none of them knew how great a part determination and love had played.

Eddie was present at the Boston Rodeo last fall, but he was just a spectator, for he is now a prosperous textile manufacturer in New Hampshire. As such, he can't afford to take any chances with buckers. He employs three hundred people, and must be able to get around and see after them.

BILLIE SHAW PERFECTS A NEW TRICK RIDING STUNT

IT MAY be that Billie Shaw is not the only cowgirl trick rider who does a Roman stand upon a running horse, but many claim that she is, and she is certainly the inventor of the stunt, one of the most thrilling and dangerous seen in the rodeo arena. The trick consists of standing with both feet in straps at the back of the saddle, instead of in the customary ones at the side of the pommel near or at the front of the saddle, then falling backward into a drag. This throws the trick rider's head dangerously near the flying feet of the speeding horse—and throws spectators into breathless suspense.

When Billie first figured out the heart-stopping stunt, she didn't broadcast the idea. Instead, she got to work practising with a horse that was standing still. Patiently she kept that up until she believed she was ready to present her stunt in regular trick riding exhibitions, and give the customers a surprise at the JE Ranch Rodeo which was on spring tour in 1945.

The rodeo had reached Cleveland, Ohio, and Billie figured she would spring her new trick, which should be the sensation of opening night. It was a sensation, all right, but in a somewhat different manner than Billie had intended.

Just before the trick riders dashed out for their exhibition, Billie was talking to one of the cowboy trick riders, Johnny Chapman.

"Watch my feature stunt tonight," she said. "I'm going to fall backward from a Roman stand to a drag, head down."

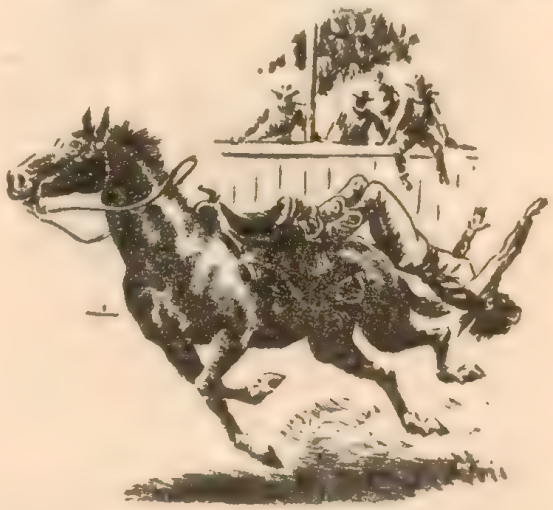
"You're crazy," declared Johnny. "You'll get the top of your head kicked off."

"Maybe," Billie shrugged, "but I'll be a sensation anyway."

Billie had already sent word to the announcer about what her feature trick—the last trick of her performance—would be, so that he would know how to announce it. But it came near being the last trick for the intrepid little trick rider in any rodeo arena.

Up until the time the trick riding exhibition came on, Billie's stunt was a complete secret to everyone except Billie herself, Johnny Chapman, and the announcer. So the other cowboys and cowgirls, as well as the spectators, were unprepared for what took place.

It is customary for trick riders doing such a drag to place their feet in the straps before



starting the run and, while sitting back practically on the rump of the horse, to start the horse on the run and ease back into the drag holding the back rigid. This keeps the head from getting too close to flying hoofs.

When it came time for Billie's performance, the announcer decided to make her featured stunt look good and dangerous. As she stood erect in the straps, he bawled:

"Presenting Billie Shaw, daring and clever cowgirl trick rider who will perform her feature trick riding stunt of dropping from a Roman stand into a death drag!"

That "death drag" was invented on the spur of the moment, but it came near being the correct name.

Billie dropped from the stand by relaxing all muscles. But something went amiss, and as her body dropped, her head swung like a pendulum so near the horse's flying hind feet that the head was struck a resounding whack, knocking her unconscious. Taking fright, the horse dashed around the ring with the limp form of the rider hanging head down. All that kept her head from being battered to a pulp was the fact that her limp form had shifted slightly to one side.

Women screamed, and fainted; even veterans of the arena who had witnessed tragedies before groaned as excited cowboys on horseback tried to catch the runaway trick riding horse. It seemed a long time before the horse was caught, but in reality was only little more than half a minute.

Billie's feet were removed from the straps, and she was carried from the ring on a stretcher.

Johnny Chapman, who had ridden beside Billie for two years, and was greatly attached to the girl, rushed back to the first aid room expecting to see her corpse. He was much surprised when he found her there, a little pale, but conscious and smiling, even if the smile was a bit wan.

"Well, you were a sensation all right!" he scolded. "I told you so!"

"Yes," said Billy calmly, "but I found out where I made my mistake. I know just how to do the stunt now. I'll show you tomorrow night."

"Can you beat that!" Johnny threw up his hands. "She's still crazy!"

If Billie was crazy then, she's still crazy now, for she has been performing the stunt ever since—and has never had another accident like the one that thrilled the audience at the Cleveland Rodeo.

TOOTS GRIFFITH RIDES A WILD STEER

ONE bitter cold winter in 1918, the late Tex Austin, one of the greatest rodeo producers of his time, a man who was always inventing new stunts with which to thrill crowds, was promoting a show in the Forum, at Wichita, Kansas. And things didn't look so good. It would be pretty difficult, he decided, to coax folks away from their home fires in this January weather to attend a rodeo.

The thing to do, of course, was to attract them with some extra special stunt. But what? It was then that Curley Griffith, who was lending his aid to the promotion, made a suggestion.

"Why not put my wife, Toots, under contract to ride wild steers?" he said. "There are mighty few cowgirls riding wild steers, and folks in this section of the country have never seen that done. It would make a big hit."

Curley grinned when Austin jumped at the idea. Because Curley had failed to mention that "Toots" was not a steer rider at all. Curley meant to talk her into being one, for he was sure he could teach her how to ride wild bovines in the four weeks before the rodeo opened.

Enthusiastically Austin called in his press agent, and pictures of the nervy cowgirl who was to ride wild and vicious steers appeared in the papers, with scary paragraphs about the human-hating qualities of the beasts, and the riding ability of the little cowgirl who weighed only a hundred pounds. But there were no pictures of her riding a steer, for the simple reason that she had never ridden one in her life. Something that even Austin didn't know.

"Toots Griffith, daring cowgirl wild steer rider," was played up as the feature of the big rodeo. It was so cold, though, that it was impossible for her to get any practise in the

open, and the stock had not yet been moved to the Forum, so all Curley could do was give Toots an oral course in wild steer riding.

Curley Griffith—he later became the father of the famous trick rider, Dick Griffith—was a master instructor in practically every

branch of the rodeo game. He was a great horseman, a great bulldogger, a steer rider and trick rider, beside being one of the best pickup men of his time. That should be enough, he thought, so every day until the rodeo opened he drilled his young wife in steer riding until she was an expert in every way—except that she had never been on the back of a steer.

Lured by the newspaper stories of the daring and beautiful cowgirl who was going to risk her life at each performance by riding a longhorn, people came to the Forum in droves. Who cared about the cold? They were going to see a new stunt attempted.

When the time came for the little cowgirl to ride the steer, she had not lost one particle of her nerve, but Curley had almost lost his. He was remembering, perhaps a little belatedly, how much he loved her. But surely nothing could go wrong if she followed his instructions. He fussed around the chutes so long, getting her ready, that the show was held up several minutes, which increased the tension.

Finally, after the third announcement that the girl was now mounted on the vicious steer in the chute, the gate was thrown open and out came the mite of humanity upon the back of the wild and plunging steer. A great roar of admiration went up, and as the steer leaped this way and that in an effort to toss the rider from his back, the applause for the girl who was hanging on to the surcingle for dear life, increased.

Curley had not had time to mount when the steer was turned out, so he ran along on foot behind the animal. But no one noticed him.

All eyes were on the little girl who was being tossed about like a cork on the waves of an angry sea.

She stuck until the whistle sounded, but by this time the steer was mad, and Curley Griffith knew it. He sped to the side of the steer, grabbed Toots from the back of the animal, and started with her toward the fence. But the steer saw the man when he snatched that hated object from his back, and the maddened brute wheeled and gave chase.

Running with a hundred pounds in his arms, it looked as if Curley could not hope to outdistance the longhorn, but fear for his loved one lent swiftness to his feet. He reached the fence ahead of the longhorn, but it was a solid wall with iron rails on top, one he could not climb with Toots in his arms. To the spectators it looked as if the expected tragedy was taking place when Curley threw Toots to the top rail, then dropped flat on the ground as the death-dealing horns struck the wall inches above him.

It was a close call, but the stunt with its thrilling climax had stolen the show. It received more applause than any other event of the rodeo. But it left one cowboy who was noted for his iron nerve—Curley Griffith—limp and shaking.

HOMER HARRIS DOESN'T LET INJURIES STOP HIM!

THERE was one contestant at the Kissimmee, Florida, Rodeo in March, 1946, who just had to win, or at least he thought so. And he believed it so strongly that he outdid himself in an exhibition of sheer nerve, one in which he took a long chance on being permanently disabled.

He was a cowboy bull rider named Homer Harris, and the chance he took was one many men had taken before him, and many more will as the years roll on. For he looked death in the face to make good in the eyes of a girl.

A year before, while at the Chicago Rodeo, Homer had met Patricia McDonald, who lived in South Chicago, just across the Indiana line. They were soon married, but it seems that Homer pictured himself to her as a little better rider than he actually was. During the first rodeo season of their married life, he tried hard to live up to the recommendation he had given himself as a rider, but he couldn't cash in often enough to suit him, or often make more than enough to pay expenses.

Homer and Pat, as she was called, went to Florida for the winter rodeo season, but most of the rodeos were small ones with small purses. Funds got so low that Pat got a job as a waitress in Kissimmee, to tide them over until the big show got there. It galled Homer to think that his wife had to work to support him, and he insisted on her quitting her job as soon as the Kissimmee Rodeo started.

"I'd better wait until we see if you're going to win the bull riding," she objected, but Homer insisted that she quit the day before the show opened.

"If you will quit," he told her, "I'll promise to win the grand finals. Then we'll have enough to make the Eastern spring circuit."

Pat quit, and from the grandstand the first day she saw Homer win first prize in the dangerous contest of Brahma bull riding. The second day he took second prize—but he was knocked down and trampled by the maddened Brahma after he had dismounted. Though shaken, Pat rode to the hospital in the ambulance with her husband, and tried to hide her worry for him.

"It's all right," she declared. "You did

your best, Homer, and I'm proud of you. I'll get my job back at the restaurant, and everything will be fine."

At the hospital, it was discovered that Homer had a dislocated shoulder and was terribly bruised, but had no broken bones. But the doctor declared that it would be a month before Homer could ride again.

"A month, nothing!" protested Homer. "It will be just twenty-three hours! I'm going to ride in the finals tomorrow, and I'm going to win that bull riding, just as I promised Pat!"

No amount of insistence on the part of the physician, or coaxing by Pat could change Homer's mind. He was determined to ride the next day, and that was that.

The doctor admired the nerve of the cowboy, and while he knew that Homer was taking a desperate chance, he did all he could to help. He began at once to bandage the injured shoulder to make it as safe for use as possible.

Homer had practically to drive Pat away from the hospital, demanding that she go to the rodeo office where they would be drawing stock for the next day's rides. She must see that he was not taken out of the contest, he said, and that a bull was drawn for him to ride.

When Pat reached the rodeo office, she had a hard time convincing the officials that Homer really meant to ride in the final contest The arena director was all for scratching his name off the contest list. He didn't want to see Homer commit suicide by trying to ride a vicious bull, as injured as the boy was, the director declared.

"There's nothing you can do about it," Judge "Bud" Mefford spoke up. "If he didn't want to ride he would have to furnish a doctor's certificate showing that he was injured, before he would be allowed to drop out of the contest, so if he wants to ride, he's paid his entrance fee and you can't keep him out."

One of the worst bucking bulls in the lot was drawn for Homer, who already had the highest score on two rides of any contestant. A good average score on this third ride would win the finals for him. But the chances were better for him being sent back to the hospital for a long stay—perhaps never being able to ride again.

On the final day Homer was out on the grounds, shoulder bandaged, and looking more as if he belonged in a hospital than in the rodeo arena. But there were plenty of well-wishers to greet him and wish him luck. The story had gone around that Homer Harris was taking such a great risk to win the

finals to keep his wife from working in a restaurant, and great cheers rang through the arena when the announcer bellowed that he would attempt to make the final ride on one of the toughest bulls in the rodeo.

Despite what must have been torture, Homer made that ride—a great ride—to the whistle. When he jumped from the bull he took a tumble, but instead of going for Homer the bull took after Judge Bud Mefford, who had eased into the danger zone to offer himself as a target for the bull and give the rider a chance to escape.

The bull came near getting Mefford, too. Pandemonium reigned until the spectators saw that Mefford was safe and unhurt, and heard that Harris had won the bull riding.

"When I tell my wife to quit a job, I mean for her to stay quit," was all that Homer would say about his ride.

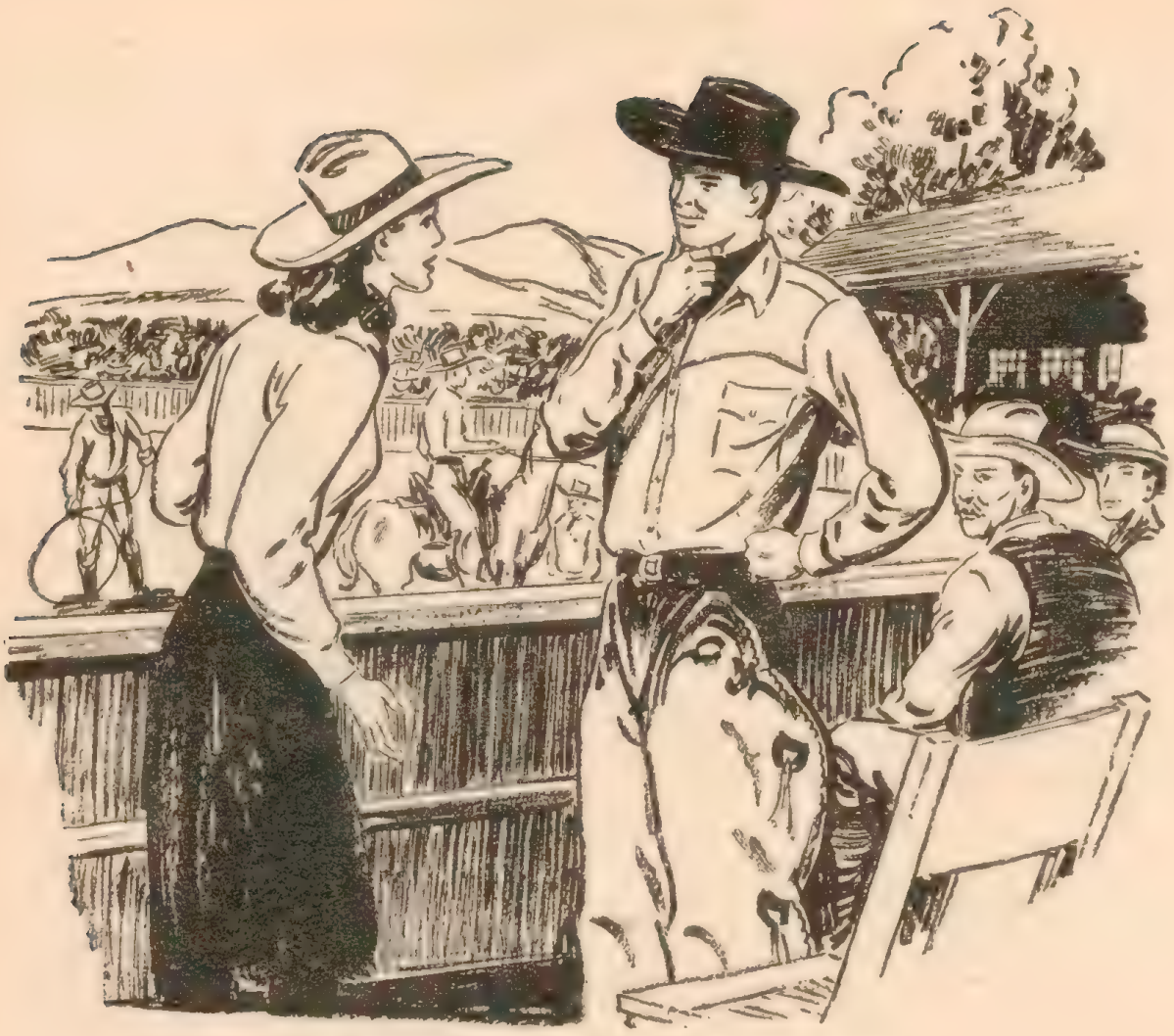
They made the Eastern rodeo circuit.

More

THRILLS IN RODEO

By FOGHORN CLANCY

COMING NEXT ISSUE!



"Gone completely Western, I see," Pete said, and grinned at Mary

Share the Wealth

By LEON V. ALMIRALL

An angel on horseback comes along to help Pete McGuinness when he makes his desperate try for victory in the arena!

PETE McGUINNES, of the 7 X V outfit in New Mexico, had the kind of hair and eyes that matched his name. Red and blue, respectively. He was young, and with lithe, firm tread walked across the rodeo grounds toward a hot dog stand over which a sign read:

PEDIGREED HOT DOGS

His Irish eyes lighted and a grin stole across his tanned face.

"That's my kind of a dog," he thought.

He went inside and took the stool next to another slim-hipped puncher busily engaged in munching one of the "dogs" between a sliced roll.

"Good, eh?" Pete suggested.

The cowboy nodded with his mouth full while his glance strayed towards a girl with wavy brown hair and gray eyes who had just

emerged from the kitchen with an order. His glance shifted back to Pete. He winked.

"Good?" he answered Pete. "She's wonderful. Look! No man's pants. She wears a dress."

Pete laughed. "I was referrin' to the dog you're eatin'. Not to the girl."

But he discovered that his glance had come to rest on the girl. Not only because she wore a dress, and not only because her figure was the sort that would look just right in the hull on a cowpony. Kind of lissome and lithe.

While she handed out checks before she went to fill his order, Pete tried to think what it was that made her seem different. Finally, he decided it must be because she was so businesslike.

"She acts as if she wanted somethin' and is all set to get it," he thought. "She's not snooty, either, but it's a cinch these cowhands don't get far with her with their kiddin'."

While he spread mustard on his "dog," he considered. His own goal was to make enough riding rough ones in rodeos so that eventually he could own his own cow outfit. What this girl's goal was, he didn't care. Long ago he had made up his mind no girl would interfere with his aim.

But as time went by he invariably found himself a customer at her hot-dog stand when he was hungry. Whether it was because of the hot-dogs or whether he merely wanted to test his vulnerability against this gray-eyed girl, Pete didn't know.

He learned her name was Mary Heaton and she came from "back East."

"And that," declared Pete, one day while he curried his cowpony, "makes it safe. Even if I ever considered the idea, no Eastern girl would ever go for my kind of life."

THEN, one day along about six thirty A.M. after he'd fed and watered his horse, he ran into the girl who operated the hot-dog stand. He told himself, though, that it was not because he had noticed she passed along this way that he had decided to be around. It was merely coincidence.

"Well, Miss Heaton," he greeted, "looks like I got a break, running across you."

"Thanks, Mr. McGuinnes." Mary smiled demurely. "You're out early for a rough string rider. They're generally late sleepers."

Pete glanced at her, surprised. She had said, "rough string rider," as easily as if she had been raised on a ranch, instead of in the East. Yet if her business was following rodeos, maybe there was nothing strange about that.

"Oh, I take care of my own cayuse," he replied. "That gets me up early." As he walked with her toward her stand he asked: "Ever get off to see the bronc ridin'?"

Mary shook her head. "I don't like that kind of riding, but I love the cowpony races. Particularly when that gold-colored little horse, Yellow Hand, does his stuff."

"Wish you'd let me try and make a convert of you," Pete said.

"I'm afraid you couldn't Mr. McGuinnes," Mary said. "But if you'd like to try why not drop over at my boarding house tomorrow night about nine o'clock? I close at eight here."

"Thank you," replied the surprised Pete. "I'll be there."

When she had gone inside and he was on his way, he wondered why he suddenly felt so happy.

Maybe it was because he failed to convert Mary on his first visit that he became a regular caller at the boarding house. Before long they were calling each other by their first names and knew a lot about each other.

She had been born and raised in the East surrounded with all the luxuries attendant upon much money, and horses were one of the luxuries. Then came the old, but always poignant story. The family wealth had been wiped out and before long both her father and mother, unable to withstand the shock, had died.

"So I decided to cut loose from everything, including my so-called friends," Mary had told Pete. "I took what little cash I had, came West, and opened up this business. Surprisingly enough it has paid."

"She's a game one," Pete had thought.

Aloud, he had suggested:

"You can't make much more than a livin', can you Mary? If it's any of my business."

"That's right, Pete. But I do something else which helps a lot."

Try as he would though, Pete couldn't wheedle from her what it was she did.

"That's my secret, Pete," she told him firmly, and changed the subject. "Why don't you take in the final cowpony race with me tomorrow after the bronc-busting event?" she invited.

"I'll make a deal with you," Pete said. "I'll see that with you if you'll weaken and see

the finals tomorrow."

"I'd hate to see you lose, Pete," she said.

Pete laughed. "I've been beaten before but with you cheerin' for me I'll sure ride my bronc. Is it a deal?"

Mary considered. Pete had told her how much the money he earned meant to him. She could understand for she had a goal quite similar to his, though she hadn't told him.

"It's a deal Pete," she said slowly, "but on one condition."

"What, Mary?"

"When you get your ranch you ask me to come and see it."

Mary was sitting close to Pete on the top step of the back porch of the boarding house, but her eyes were on the yellow-rimmed edge of the full moon which had just poked itself above the Black Range. Her eyes never left it, though she was aware that Pete took her hand and held it gently.

"I'm not any good at this," he said huskily, "but I'm dead certain I love you, Mary, and—and—well, will you share my ranch with me?" His arm stole around her slim waist as he added softly, "I want to share whatever I have with you, Mary, if you'll let me."

Mary half-turned, and her gray eyes looked deep into Pete's blue eyes.

"Win or lose, Pete," she whispered, "I'm for that kind of a share the wealth program.

Then, while a fleecy white cloud whipped across the curious eyes of the Man in the Moon, Pete took Mary in his arms and held her close. . . .

WHEN Pete went into the rodeo enclosure the next day his spirits lifted, as always, to the shouts of the crowd and the smack and whiplike crack of the breeze-flung banners that flew from the poles on the stands.

Busily his eyes searched for the face he wanted to see. Then he saw Mary as she stood up, and made his way to her.

"Hi!" he greeted.

"Hi, Pete!" And as she saw Pete's surprised eyes on her, "Why the stare?"

"Gone completely Western I see."

He grinned, taking in her silk shirtwaist open at the collar, the creamy white of her throat almost but not quite hidden by a brilliant scarf. His grin broadened as he saw her light whipcord divided skirt, her wide-brimmed sombrero, small high-heeled boots, and spurs.

Mary laughed and into her eyes came the light which always burns when kindled by the sight of a loved one. Her eyes lingered on Pete, sinewy, broad-shouldered, tall and supple, a true knight of the rodeo arena and the wide open spaces. Here, she thought, was the kind of Western man she had read about. The kind to "ride the river with."

"This get-up, you mean, Pete?" she asked smiling.

Pete nodded. "Yeah. And you wear them duds as if you was used to 'em. Durned if they don't make you look prettier'n ever—and that's quite an order."

"I'd kiss you for that if there wasn't such a crowd, Pete," said Mary.

"I dare you," replied Pete. "What do we care for crowds?"

But before Mary could refuse or accept the dare, the raucous voice of the announcer roared:

"Ladees and gents! These here two events are the finals in the buckin' horse ride and the cowpony race. The bronc ridin' comes first and Pete McGuinnes—"

He was interrupted by wild shouts and cheers. Most of the spectators had seen Pete ride and knew they were in for sight of a real battle between a man and a four-legged outlaw. There would be no riding on spurs by sticking the rowels into the cinch. Not with this redhead in the hull.

Pete grinned happily and though Mary watched him with pride, there also was fear in her eyes. Why, she thought, did some men revel in danger? This man in particular. She almost made a plea for him to give it up, but clenched her small fists tightly, and gave him a bright-eyed smile.

Again the announcer's voice rose above the hubbub:

"Pete McGuinnes'll ride Atomic Bomb, as mean a cayuse as the explosive whose name he bears. He'll be comin' out of Chute Number Two!"

That was the chute right next to Mary's seat.

"Well, that's my number," said Pete, with a grin, "so I'd better mosey. Wish me luck."

"Luck to you, Pete," said Mary. For the moment of their handclasp each looked into the other's face with deep understanding of all this ride meant to them. That handclasp was not merely a pledge to share their material wealth but also to share their young love, which they knew would burn high and long and never dwindle.

When Pete walked close to the chute he heard the smack of the bronc's heels against the poles.

"Come on, Irish!" someone shouted. "Let's see you tame this bomber like you done them others."

Pete smiled grimly.

At the chute now he examined the cinches of his hull as well as his stirrup-leathers. They were all right. No jealous rider had used a knife on the sly, but that *had* been done as he once had learned to his dismay. He tried his long-shanked flowerlike roweled spurs. They were set tight on his high-heeled boots.

Then he went up the chute poles to the top, lifted up his saddle blanket and eased it down on the big buckskin. The outlaw shook it off and flung his heels. A cowboy below reached gingerly through the poles, picked it up and handed it to Pete.

"I'm glad that baby's yours, cowboy," he declared.

Three times Pete laid on the blanket before the Bomber let it stick, and twice Pete's forty-pound saddle sailed into the air before it stuck long for Pete to cinch it tight. But finally it was set and right. The puncher on the ground beside the chute reached for the end of the hackamore rope worn by the outlaw, and passed it to Pete. He lowered himself into his hull, stuck his boots deep into his stirrups, and firmed himself.

"Signal the judge I'm set to turn this wolf loose," he told the puncher.

The cowboy passed the word along, and the announcer got it as the judge did.

"Out of Chute Number Two!" the announcer yelled, "McGuinnes on Atomic Bomb! Let'er buck!"

The puncher by the chute flung wide the gate and ducked behind it.

"Yee-ee—yip," yelled Pete, as the animated Bomber catapulted out into the arena.

THE pent-up breath of the crowd exploded in a roar. But Mary's breath felt as if it would stifle her heart. She stared wide-eyed and horrified at the sight of the hurtling four-legged brute which leaped high and came down on four stiff legs with power enough to break the back of the man who topped him. But the man was still there and she heard a cowboy near her exclaim:

"Stickin' like a horse fly on a mule's ear!"

With the hackamore rope in his left hand and his hat in his right, Pat slapped the buckskin on the neck and rolled his spur rowles along his sides from shoulder to rump.

The Bomber "broke in two," "came apart," "slatted his sails," but always Pete was with him and never a ray of light showed between him and his hull. Suddenly, when the Bomber moved, his feet never struck the ground in a straight line. Instead, he used a weaving motion, and Mary could feel the crowd tense with her.

"A weaver!" someone shouted. "Watch him, cowboy!"

But Pete's lithe body took it with easy balance although he knew here was one of the worst of all outlaw's tricks.

"Jehoshaphat!" he thought. "Ten seconds is sure a long time endin'."

As if in reply, the outlaw stopped dead still in his tracks, but only for a moment. Then he whirled this way and that. Sometimes he circled, sometimes he cut figure eights. Still Pete rode him, his lips frozen into a thin tight line, and little beads of moisture trickled down into his eyes.

The crowd was up now. They knew they were watching a "ridin' fool," and paid him tribute with shouts and yells, and there were also the high-pitched screams of women's voices.

Here was the thrill this crowd sought. But to Mary they were moments of agony. She had to force herself to watch.

As if the Bomber realized he was licked, he went berserk. He seesawed, to land alternately on his front and hind feet. Then, humping his back, he went up and up and up, and came down on all fours.

"Upsa daisy!" a ranny whooped. "What a horse!"

"He's liable to stomp you so deep in the ground you'll take roots and sprout, cowboy!" another yelled.

But what was far more important to Mary at that moment than anything else in the world was the shrill blast of the judge's whistle. And at the same instant the outlaw horse reared on his hind legs, teetered, lost his balance and crashed.

Shouts of fear rang out from hoarse throats that a moment before had yelled encouragement to the cowboy who was resisting the big buckskin's efforts to rid himself of his rider.

And even as Atomic Bomb went over backward, Mary was out of her seat and racing toward Pete's still form just beyond the killer's threshing feet. As the horse

came up standing, the pick-up rider grabbed the hackamore rope and led the Bomber away, just as the ambulance clanged to a stop beside the prone figure of Pete.

Two attendants in white yanked open the door and dragged out a stretcher. They placed it beside Pete while one intern made a hasty examination. The hushed crowd craned necks and Mary stared with frightened eyes. As she saw Pete lifted onto the stretcher to be placed in the ambulance, she quavered:

"Is he badly hurt?"

"Looks like he made a lucky roll after jerking his feet from the stirrups just in time, but we won't know for certain until he's been examined."

They slid Pete into the ambulance, the interns followed, the bell clanged, and the ambulance sped on its way.

Mary started to follow, but whispered to herself:

"No! I must go through with my end of our deal anyway. That's the way Pete would want it. Besides, although he's won first money his hospital bill will take a chunk of it. We promised to share each other's wealth, so I've got to do this."

She turned and walked slowly toward the rodeo office.

"Pete McGuinness is thought not to be seriously injured," she heard the announcer call, and there was thunderous applause, before he went on: "Now comes the final of the cowpony quarter mile race. Due to illness of Mary Heaton's usual rider, she'll ride Yellow Hand herself. The distance—four times around the arena. The prize—five hundred dollars to the winner!"

WHEN Mary entered the office the man behind the desk glanced up and his genial tanned face lit with a smile.

"Reckon you can ride that little horse of yours," he asked. "I suppose that's why you're here?"

"I'm going to try, Mr. Dakin. I've got to. Got to win too."

"Well, good luck. But watch that Can Do pony. He's a runnin' fool."

He handed her her number which she slipped on her sleeve, thanked him and went back into the arena.

Soon the familiar roar of, "They're off!" announced that Mary was busy with the side line she had told Pete helped a lot, when he had wondered whether she could make a living with her hot dog stand.

Meantime, in the hospital, Pete had come out of his fog and was looking at the doctor.

"Did I win, Doc?" he asked, with his engaging grin.

"You tamed him, cowboy, but it cost you something."

"Meanin'?"

"Meaning you opened up an old scar on your leg and you'll have to lie quiet for a couple of days. But you're lucky, son. You might have been killed."

"And that ain't the first time," agreed Pete. "I guess I'm just a tough hombre."

The doctor nodded. "You'll be able to ride again before long," he said, went out, and closed the door.

"There goes our spread," Pete thought grimly. "Leastwise, for the time being. Wonder how come Mary hasn't showed? Mebbe they wouldn't let her in."

But at that very moment he heard a knock on the door and his heart lifted.

"Come in if you're good lookin'," he called.

Slowly the door opened and a brown-haired girl with flushed cheeks looked inside.

"You are," called Pete, "so come in fast."

The next instant the girl was beside him, her arms around his neck.

"How bad is it, Pete?" she whispered.

"Bad enough. Mary, I'm afraid the hospital will be sharin' our wealth before we do."

"I don't care about that, Pete. I mean how bad are you hurt?"

Pete told her, and she smiled happily.

"Oh, I wouldn't worry about that," she said. "I've heard tell there's more than one way to skin a cat." There was a twinkle in her gray eyes.

"I don't get you," Pete said.

"Remember our agreement to share our wealth?"

"Yeah, but—"

"No buts, darling. That was our agreement." Before he could interrupt she rushed ahead: "Well, you remember I told you how I added to my income was my secret?"

"So what?" Pete managed to get in.

"So, Yellow Hand is my cowpony and I won first money in the final race today. Look!"

She reached down into a pocket of her skirt, drew out a piece of pink paper and handed it to Pete. He took the check and his eyes bulged.

(Concluded on page 112)

Doreen was off her pony and in Joe's arms

Singing Rope

By MONICA MORTON

When treachery stalks the arena, cowgirl Doreen Welch takes a tip from the Romans—with surprising results!

DOREEN WELCH'S merry musical laughter rang out happily above the general din made by the rodeo crowd as she stood at the race-track rail, with Joe Finley beside her.

Doreen was revealing her happiness shamelessly and didn't care who noticed it. Her face was flushed, and her eyes were glistening as she clutched Joe's hand and looked up into his beaming face.

This was the first time they had seen each other in weeks. The handsome young foreman of the Tumbling F outfit, the property of his uncle, Henry Finley, had been too busy to ride to the Diamond W, owned by Sam Welch, Doreen's father, for a visit.

Persons standing near them were watching Doreen and Joe and smiling at their evident joy in each other's company. They made an attractive pair. Joe was tall and broad-shouldered, and moved with the lithe grace of a cougar. Doreen was tall also, a slender, vivacious brunette. She was wearing a buckskin riding costume, with a blue silk neckcloth and a big white sombrero. Doreen was worth a second long look from anybody.

She had an enviable reputation as a roper, both practical and fancy. As a mere toddler she had been fascinated by the rope work of her father's Diamond W waddies. So when her father finally gave her a short, lightweight rope of her own she refused to consider it a toy but began learning how to use it properly.

Through the years since then—Doreen was twenty-three now—she had practised roping with unusual fervor. She could spin ropes like a champion exhibitionist, making them seem like living things as they curled and hissed and sang through the air. Long ago, the Indians in the district had given her the name of "Singing Rope."

And when it came to actual business roping, nobody on the Indian Springs range, man or woman, could beat her, not even the experienced cowboys. Steers, calves, horses, riders—Doreen cast her noose and roped them all expertly.

"It's sure mighty good to be able to spend some time with you for a couple of days, honey," Joe was whispering to her now. "Out at the Tumblin' F we've been so blamed busy that I haven't had a chance to ride over and visit. I've sure missed yuh a heap."

"I've missed you a heap, too, Joe," Doreen confessed. "But perhaps some day we'll be together more."

JOE laughed and squeezed her fingers, and Doreen glanced up at him and blushed and laughed in reply. Both were thinking of the same thing, a rosy future together. They were hoping they would be married and settled before it was rodeo time again.

There were no real obstacles to their marriage. They were only to decide just where and how they wished to live. Joe's uncle, who had raised Joe after he had been left an orphan at twelve, had promised Joe a share in the Tumbling F. Doreen would inherit the Diamond W some day. There were no financial worries.

And there was no question about the stability of their attachment and romance. Doreen and Joe had known each other from childhood. It seemed to Doreen that she and Joe had loved each other always.

Many other girls had rolled their eyes at Joe without making the slightest impression on him. Doreen had other suitors, especially Martin Timms, a middle-aged widower who owned a large cattle outfit, and also about half of the town of Indian Springs. But Doreen and Joe could see nobody but each other. Doreen trembled when she thought how bleak her life would be if anything bad happened to Joe.

She gripped Joe's hand and laughed merrily again now as she noticed what was happening out on the race track. Half Moon, the fat old Ogallalla Sioux squaw, was being helped into her saddle, and that was a spectacle to cause merriment.

When the outrageously obese Half Moon mounted her piebald pony with the help of bystanders, the saddle simply disappeared, engulfed and obliterated by a mass of flabby fat.

Half Moon was a well-known character on the Indian Springs range. She had the habit of uttering mysterious and unexpected prophecies, many of which came true in a startling manner. So superstitious persons looked at her askance.

Half Moon was quick to profit by that. She ruled the younger squaws of the tribe like a merciless tyrant, using stern glances and threatening guttural words, and sometimes a switch snapped from a branch of the nearest tree. The other squaws feared her. So Half Moon usually had her way—and always won the squaws' pony race at the annual Indian Springs Rodeo.

The other squaws knew better than to win. So they always lost to Half Moon by a narrow margin, even if compelled to pull up swifter mounts and let Half Moon surge ahead to victory. Those who bet on the squaws' race always wagered on which rider would come in second. They knew who would be first.

The squaws' race had just been announced by the chief judge, and the spectators settled back to have a little amusement between thrilling, spine-tingling, dangerous exhibitions.

Seven squaws appeared on the track for the race. They were wearing native cos-

tumes heavy with beautiful beadwork, and had thick braids of black hair hanging down in front over their shoulders. They mounted their ponies and started up the track toward the quarter pole, Half Moon in the rear.

Standing at the rail beside Joe, Doreen called to the old squaw as she rode near:

"Rideum good, Half Moon! Winum race! Getum twenty-five dollars!"

Half Moon nodded in acknowledgment of the good wish, then suddenly pulled her pony to a stop at the rail and looked at Doreen searchingly. The old squaw's countenance held a queer expression. Her eyes rolled, then became fixed and glaring. Her mouth sagged open for a moment. She shivered through her flabby body, and spoke in a sepulchral voice.

"A black demon stands at the shoulder of Singing Rope! Beware of the black demon!"

Half Moon kicked her pony with her heels and rode on up the track after the others. Doreen laughed, but with the feeling that possibly she should not. Half Moon's remark had sent a chill through her and had given her a sense of dread, though she tried to tell herself that was nonsense.

Many persons were ready to declare that Half Moon was able to see things others could not see, and knew things hidden from her neighbors. It seemed ridiculous to believe anything like that, some told themselves—but they went on believing after a few demonstrations.

"Honey," Joe whispered to Doreen, "do you reckon that old Half Moon meant I'm a black demon?"

Joe's bantering tone brought Doreen to herself, cleared her mind and dispelled the queer feeling.

"Of course not!" she replied. "That was only Half Moon's way of warning me she thinks I'm due for some trouble."

"Yeah? Let me tell you somethin'," Joe declared. "No trouble better come messin' around you while I'm here unless it wants to take on a stiff fight."

DOREEN smiled at him, squeezed his hand again, and looked up the track to see the squaws riding around to the quarter pole to start their race.

"I sure hope I can win the buckin' contest this year," Joe told her. "I expect to get through the semi-finals this afternoon without much trouble, but I'll have real competition in the finals tomorrow. Ed Panlon, the new Box Cross rider, is good."

"You'll win, Joe," Doreen assured him.

He grinned at her. "Yeah, I might do that without any trouble if you were the sole judge, honey. But them ornery hombres in the judges' stand ain't got any special prejudice in my favor. To them I ain't nothin' but a name and number on the program, and I've got to be good to win."

"How's the betting?" Doreen asked.

"It's a sort of tossup 'tween me and Ed Panlon. Even money the last I heard, and plenty of it up on both of us."

"I do my rope spinning stunt after this squaw race," Doreen reminded him, "and then it'll be noon intermission. You ride over to our camp with me and eat there."

Joe nodded his agreement.

"Here come the squaws!" some man at the rail shouted.

Around the bend of the track and down the stretch came the racing ponies in a cloud of dust. The squaws were riding in their usual manner, erect in the saddle instead of bending forward like jockeys.

As usual, Half Moon was racing on the rail and a length in the lead, with two pursuing her closely and the others strung out behind. The crowd laughed and cheered as Half Moon went under the wire a winner.

The chief judge announced the result of the race and called the next event—Doreen's rope spinning exhibition. Cheers greeted her as she went out upon the track in front of the grand-stand, carrying her ropes. She was a great favorite with people of the range.

She gave her usual exhibition of artistic rope spinning. To her mind, this sort of thing was only a pretty program filler. Tomorrow would bring the real thing, roping flying targets from her saddle—calves, steers, wild horses, cowboy riders who would do their best to dodge her noose.

When Doreen finished and waved at the crowd to acknowledge the applause, noon intermission was announced. The spectators began leaving the grandstand and track and flowing toward the picnic grounds in the grove down by the creek.

One of the attendants picked up Doreen's ropes and followed her across the track and into the arena. Now she would find Joe again, and they would get on their ponies and ride to the Diamond W camp to eat at the chuckwagon.

She elbowed a path through the jostling crowd and got off the track. She didn't see

Joe anywhere, and supposed he had gone to the picket line to get their ponies. Thanking the attendant, Doreen took her ropes from him and went on.

Suddenly a man stood in her way. He lifted his hat to her and smiled. He was tall, dark, well-dressed, middle-aged—Martin Timms, the wealthy widower who had courted Doreen for several years without success.

There was something about Martin Timms that put Doreen on guard as against an enemy, though he never had revealed himself as one. Doreen thought her feeling might come from the knowledge that Timms had the reputation of being ruthless in business affairs.

"I was waiting for you, Doreen," Timms told her. "I've had them prepare a special luncheon for us at the hotel. Hope your father can join us. Know where he is?"

"I haven't seen Dad for hours," Doreen replied. "He's probably gassing with some of the oldtimers. Thanks, but I'm just going to our camp to eat."

"But I've had something special prepared, so why eat at your chuckwagon?" Timms asked, smiling at her again and trying to take her arm to direct her through the crowd. "I'll have a couple of my men look for your father."

"Some other time, thanks," Doreen said. "I've already asked Joe Finley to eat with us."

"Joe? Oh, yes! Doreen, I've known you for a long time, and you know I'm crazy about you. I always have your best interests at heart. About Joe—" He paused.

"What about Joe?" she asked.

"It's like this, Doreen. You've known Joe since you both were youngsters. You've been almost like brother and sister. So it's no more'n natural that you don't realize his true character and see his weaknesses."

"Joe seems all right to me," Doreen defended loyally.

"Let's find your father and go to the hotel to eat," Timms begged. "I'm trying to save you from embarrassment."

"Thanks, but I'm hurrying to the camp." She invited, "You come with me and eat there."

"And what I had prepared for us?"

"Somebody else will eat it," Doreen said.

TIMMS bowed to her again.

"Sorry," he told her. "I was trying to save you from a painful scene. I know you fancy that you're in love with Joe, but that's only childish nonsense. I want to marry you, Doreen. I've told you that before. I can give you everything."

"We've discussed that before, and the answer is still 'no'," Doreen broke in. "I'm sorry, but that's the way it is."

"We'll see," Timms muttered, his eyes glittering, after the manner of a man making a threat. "I can afford to wait until you come to your senses. Maybe you'll learn shortly that Joe isn't all you think he is."

"What are you talking about?" she demanded.

But Timms did not answer. He smiled unpleasantly, bowed slightly, and turned to thrust his way through the passing crowd.

Doreen had a feeling of impending disaster as she watched him go. She hurried on to the picket line, where Joe was waiting with the ponies. She did not tell him of her encounter with Martin Timms. They got into their saddles and rode quickly to the Diamond W camp down by the creek, where appetizing odors came from the chuckwagon and men of the outfit were gathering to eat.

Sitting at a rough table under a tree, Doreen and Joe and Doreen's father had almost finished the meal when riders came slowly into the camp. With surprise, Doreen saw they were Sheriff Matt Shane, the grizzled local official, one of his deputies, Martin Timms, and Henry Finley, Joe's uncle.

They dismounted and walked slowly toward the table. Sam Welch got up to receive them, smiling and gesturing to indicate their welcome in the camp.

"Howdy, Sheriff—howdy, gents!" Welch greeted. "You're just in time for potluck, and the luck's purty good today. Got some thick juicy steaks. Flop on a bench and make yoreselves comfortable, and I'll get the cook busy."

"This here is a business visit, Sam," old Sheriff Matt Shane grumbled, acting like a man ashamed.

"Business?" Welch replied, laughing. "Shucks! I've paid my taxes, and ain't been killin' anybody."

Doreen was watching them all as she sat beside Joe. She had a feeling that trouble was coming, that Half Moon's hint had been correct.

"It's Joe Finley I'm wantin'," the sheriff said.

"You want me?" Joe asked. "For what?"

"It's a cussed outrage!" Joe's gray-haired uncle bellowed. "This Martin Timms—"

"Quiet, everybody, and let me do the talkin'!" the sheriff ordered. "No blab until I spin the yarn. It's like this, Joe. Martin Timms has sworn out a warrant against you, and it's my duty to arrest you on it. Can't do anything else, you understand. Nothin' personal in it."

"A warrant for what?" Joe demanded, his face grim as he got upon his feet.

"You're accused of stealin' five hundred dollars belongin' to Timms."

"Why, that's ridiculous!" Doreen cried, springing up and clutching Joe's arm. "Why would Joe have to steal?"

"Sorry I had to swear out a warrant," Timms told them, in his oily voice. "But a good citizen can't overlook such things. Thought it was my duty."

"I've a notion to beat you half to death!" Joe roared.

"Hold it!" the sheriff commanded, his hand dropping to his holster. "Here's the yarn. Martin Timms accuses Joe of takin' a bundle of currency, five hundred dollars' worth, from under the end of the bar in his saloon. He's got two witnesses who saw Joe reach under the bar and get somethin' and put it into his pocket."

"What would Joe want with that much money?" Doreen's father demanded.

"Bettin'. Joe, ain't it true you did some bettin' on yoreself in the bronc bustin'?"

"Sure I did!"

"I've trailed some of the bets," the sheriff continued. "Got hold of some of the money you put up. Trouble is, some of them bills—well, Mr. Timms took 'em on a debt."

"Cyrus Moore paid me the money on his ranch mortgage," Timms broke in. "He's a queer gent, as you all know. Has a habit of markin' currency with his brand. The sheriff means he located some of the marked bills and learned that Joe had bet 'em."

"So I'm bein' framed, huh?" Joe snapped at Timms. "Marked money and all." He glanced around at the others. "Martin Timms gave me that money."

"Gave it to you?" the sheriff asked. "For what?"

Timms had lifted his eyebrows slightly and was smiling, Doreen noticed.

JOE was glowering at Timms accusingly. "He gave it to me to bet with," he explained. "He told me that he was bettin' heavy on me and that the odds were comin' down. He handed me that bunch of bills and said, 'Joe, you go around and scatter this, bettin' on yourself. That'll show confidence. I don't want folks to guess that I'm doin' all the heavy bettin' on you.' So I did like he said, keepin' a record of the bets."

"Pardon me, but that statement is ridiculous," Timms interrupted again. "It is well-known that I've been betting heavily on Ed Panlon, the Box Cross rider."

"And a lot of Joe Finley money showin' up might lengthen the odds on Panlon, huh?" Doreen's father chimed in. "Joe feelin' confident and bettin' on himself—folks might start offerin' three or four to one on yore man Panlon, huh?"

"Just a minute!" Joe roared. "Timms, you told me to take that money and bet it on myself. You said to reach under the end of the bar and get it where you'd left it, so nobody'd see you givin' me money and maybe wonder about it."

"Does that yarn sound plausible?" Timms asked them all. "I hate to cause trouble, but it's my duty as a good citizen—"

"Since when have yuh been a good citizen?" Doreen's father yelled. "Tryin' to blacken a boy's character!"

Joe started to launch himself forward, but Doreen clung to him and held him back. "Smash him later, Joe," she said. "Not now."

"But he's prob'ly got some of the men who work for him busy spreadin' it all over the place that I'm a thief!" Joe protested.

"And it may be a trick to upset you, so you won't do so good in the bronc busting," Doreen hinted. "So Mr. Timms has a lot of money bet on Ed Panlon, has he? You can hurt him most, Joe, by beating Panlon and hitting Mr. Timms in the pocketbook."

Timms lifted a hand slightly. "Please, Doreen! I really don't deserve your hard words. I realize what you think about Joe, having known him since you both were kids, and being like a sister to him. But maybe you'll thank me later for showing just what sort of man he is."

"That's enough!" Sheriff Shane bellowed, as there were more indications that Joe might turn violently belligerent. "You'll come along with me, Joe."

"Come along where?" Joe said defiantly. "You ain't goin' to put me in jail!"

"That won't be necessary, Joe. Your uncle is ready to put up a bail bond. We'll ride into town and it won't take more'n half an

hour. You'll be back in time for the bronc ridin'."

"Yeah, and I'll ride along and put up half the bail and show everybody where I stand!" Welch raged. "Oh, I understand this, Timms! My girl won't look at you—that's the trouble. And I'd disown her if she did. So you're tryin' to disgrace Joe, the man she prefers."

"Ridiculous!" Timms scoffed.

"You think you're a purty big man, Timms," Welch went on hotly. "You own a fine ranch and half the buildin's in Indian Springs, the hotel and saloon and gamblin' joint and a half interest in the biggest store. Got a flock of ranch mortgages. But you ain't got any mortgage on the Diamond W, Mr. Timms, nor on the Tumblin' F. Me and Finley can fight yuh, and by gravy we'll do it!"

"Just because I'm trying to be a good citizen—"

"Shut your mouth and ride out of my camp pronto!" Welch shouted at him. "I won't be able to hold back my men much longer."

Diamond W waddies had been gathering during the scene, and had overheard and understood. Their glances at Martin Timms were murderous. They adored Doreen, liked Joe, and knew Timms for a mercenary scoundrel. At the slightest gesture from Welch, they would have handled Timms roughly.

Doreen leaned against a tree, gripping Joe's hand, as Timms mounted and rode away. The others waited for Welch's pony to be brought.

"Don't worry, honey," she whispered to Joe.

"But can't you see how it is?" Joe asked her. "It'll be his story against mine, and I've got sense enough to realize that my yarn sounds mighty weak."

"Nobody who knows you believes you'd steal," she said loyally. "You ride into town with the others and get this business fixed, then hurry back and go into the semi-finals of the bucking contest and get placed. You've got to beat Ed Panlon tomorrow and hit Martin Timms in the purse."

BUT as Joe rode away with the others and Doreen started walking to her tent, she was worrying. Unless something happened to reveal the truth, Joe would have to stand trial. And even if acquitted, there would be those mean enough to say that his popularity, his uncle's money, and the general feeling against Timms were responsible for the acquittal more than Joe's innocence.

As she came to her tent, fat Half Moon came waddling around it and confronted Doreen.

"Me haveum grub?" she asked.

"Sure, Half Moon," Doreen said. "Go to the chuckwagon and eat all you want."

"For haveum grub, me tellum prophecy."

Doreen whirled suddenly to face her.

"You and your prophecies! Half Moon, I've got an idea. You learn things, and base your silly prophecies on what you learn. How about it?"

The fat squaw blinked a moment, but did not speak.

"I've always treated you well," Doreen continued. "Now the man I'm in love with is in trouble and may be disgraced. If you can help me, Half Moon, do it."

"Half Moon like Singing Rope," the squaw admitted. "Singing Rope always kind to Half Moon and giveum plenty grub. Now Singing Rope has guessed secret. I scareum other squaws and braves and makeum tell me what they see and hear. Then I makeum prophecies."

"How about this case, about Joe?" Doreen asked.

"Two braves overhear Timms man make plot to have Joe called thief. Timms man think he have Joe put in big jailhouse and then he get Singing Rope."

"I guessed that much," Doreen said. "What else?"

"Timms man bet heap money on Box Cross rider to win buck contest. Have to beat Joe or Timms man lose fortune. Joe be careful when he ride."

"I'll warn him, Half Moon. What braves overheard Timms talking?"

Half Moon named them. And Doreen knew that no jury in that part of the country would take the half-hearted testimony of a dozen Indians seriously against the word of one white man. Doreen did not fear Joe would be convicted and sentenced to prison if tried. But there would always remain a suspicion in the minds of many. She didn't want to start married life with Joe under a cloud.

"Half Moon, I'll keep quiet about how you get the stuff to make prophecies out of, if you'll do as I say."

"Do what?"

"Tell the other squaws and braves to watch and listen. Have them tell you everything

they learn. Then you tell me tomorrow morning. You do that and you can eat your head off here at the camp three times a day."

"Me do—um."

"Go to the chuckwagon, then, and start eating," Doreen ordered.

She lifted her voice and called to the chuckwagon cook and told him to feed Half Moon well.

Before she had been back at the track and arena long, before the afternoon crowd was settled in the grandstand, Doreen guessed that news of the charge against Joe had been spread. She could tell that by the way people looked at her and spoke to her with a tinge of pity in their voices.

When Sheriff Matt Shane and the others returned from town, where the matter of bail had been fixed, Doreen got aside with Joe and her father and Henry Finley. She told them of her conversation with Half Moon and ordered them to keep it secret.

"You must be careful, Joe," she said. "Timms will do anything to keep you from beating Ed Panlon. He may even try something this afternoon to keep you from going into the finals. He has plenty of men who'll do anything he asks, for money."

"We're goin' to watch over Joe every minute," Doreen's father told her. "Our waddies, and Finley's, will be everywhere, listenin' and watchin'. If Timms or his men make a move, there'll be some fireworks."

"I'll have my deputies watchin', too," Sheriff Shane said. "I believe every word of Joe's story. But Timms swore out the warrant and I had to serve it."

The afternoon program went through without unusual incident, and finally the semi-finals in the bucking contest were called. Four riders were to compete, and the best two would fight it out in the finals the next day.

Diamond W men and Tumbling F men had been guarding Joe and loitering around the chutes to see that none of Timms' hirelings played tricks. Doreen had been with Joe most of the time.

"Don't be nervous now," she whispered, as he mounted to ride to the chutes. "Remember that the best way to square accounts with Timms is to win the bucking contest and make him lose the money he's bet."

ONE man rode with ill fortune tagging him on the shoulder. He was thrown and hurt and taken away to the hospital tent. Then Ed Panlon, the new Box Cross rider, rode, and the cheers of the crowd told he had done well. The third man was hopelessly out of it.

There was a smattering of cheers when Joe was announced, but not the applause which mention of his name usually got from a rodeo crowd. He drew a wicked horse and made a spectacular ride. The announcement of the judges was expected—Joe and Panlon would fight it out tomorrow.

At the close of the day's program, Doreen rode side by side with Joe back to the Diamond W camp, where he was to stop for a short time before going on to his uncle's Tumbling F setup, where his tent had been pitched.

"Maybe I shouldn't be ridin' with you, honey, with some folks thinkin' that I'm only a thievin' skunk," Joe said.

Doreen laughed at him. "Anybody who thinks you're a thieving skunk isn't worth considering. And what sort of girl would I be if I didn't stick beside you now? Not the kind you'd want to marry, huh?"

"I'm hopin'—" he began

"Stop worrying," Doreen ordered. "It's your one job to get a good rest tonight, and go into the arena tomorrow and win that contest. The boys are watching to see that nobody plays tricks on you."

He rode with her to her tent. The evening meal was about ready, but Joe decided he would go on to the Tumbling F camp to eat.

"Mustn't forget that I'm foreman of the outfit," he told Doreen. "The men always bring their arguments to me to be settled, and they may have some. I'll see you tomorrow, honey."

Doreen didn't sleep much that night. She tossed on her cot and worried about Joe's predicament. He was going to be her husband, and she wanted his reputation clean, with not even the hint of a suspicion clinging to it.

Trial and acquittal on the theft charge would not be enough. People of the range must be made certain that there had been no basis for the charge in the first place.

She had made certain plans before dawn came. She got up and dressed, bathed her face in cold water, and wandered from the tents and across to the chuckwagon where the cook was getting things started, and already had coffee prepared.

"Feed Half Moon up to her chin when she shows up," Doreen told the cook. "She's

being a big help to me, though perhaps she doesn't know it."

"Here she comes already," the cook replied, pointing.

Half Moon rode up on her piebald pony, and panted and grunted and finally got out of the saddle. Doreen took her aside and talked earnestly to her while Half Moon swigged hot coffee and waited for more substantial food to be made ready.

In speech so slow that it tormented Doreen, Half Moon revealed what the younger squaws and braves of the rodeo detachment of the tribe had seen and overheard the evening before. Doreen kept her face a mask, but her heart was hammering at her ribs. She had the facts she wanted, but she could present them only on Indian hearsay, and that would not be enough. Martin Timms must be forced to admit the truth of those facts.

Doreen ate and hurried to her tent to put on a rodeo costume for the day. She was to do some real roping just before the afternoon intermission. And, after the intermission, would come the finals of the bucking contest, the high point of the rodeo.

The crowd gathered, the band was playing as Doreen rode across the arena and put her pony on a picket line near the judges' stand. She wandered toward the race-track rail, saw Joe and his uncle a short distance away talking to friends. She wanted to avoid Joe just then.

Half Moon was standing near the rail, and Doreen gave her a furtive signal. She had made certain plans with Half Moon.

Martin Timms was the person for whom Doreen was searching, and finally she saw him in the end of the grandstand. Going through the gate, Doreen crossed the race-track before the program began, waving to friends and attracting attention. Timms saw her as she had been hoping he would, and a glance assured her that Half Moon had wabbled across the track also and was not far away.

TIMMS came down the steps from the grandstand and confronted Doreen.

"I've been hoping I could see you for a few minutes, Doreen," he said. "This thing—I don't like it. There's something I want to tell you. Let's walk away from the crowd."

Doreen fell into step beside him, and they walked for a short distance to where there was a bench beneath a tree, and sat down.

"I'm sorry about Joe," Timms said. "You've known him since you both were kids, and I know how you feel. It's mighty tough to have your illusions wrecked. I felt I was doing my duty. But—well, I'm wondering if something could be arranged."

"What?" Doreen asked.

"I might withdraw the charge and refuse to prosecute, if Joe will agree not to sue me for false arrest."

"That wouldn't clear Joe. People would say we'd bought you off."

"Oh, I'll make up some story that'll clear him. It won't be difficult. Doreen, this is my last try. I'm crazy about you and want to marry you. Give me your promise, let a few people know, and I'll see that Joe is cleared. I'll build a big new ranchhouse on my place, and a house for you here in town—"

He stopped speaking as Half Moon came waddling up to them. Doreen kept back a smile. For once, Half Moon had proved reliable. She had appeared immediately after getting Doreen's furtive signal.

"Go away!" Timms snapped at the old squaw.

"Wait, Martin!" Doreen said. The use of his first name shocked him into silence. "I like Half Moon. And she really—well, she knows things. She's proved it to me. Maybe she wants to tell me something."

Half Moon stopped in front of them.

"Not tellin' Singing Rope anything," she said, in her sepulchral voice. "Spirits tell me things about Martin Timms."

"Nonsense!" Timms said. "I'll give you a piece of silver, and you get away. That's all you're after, you pest."

Half Moon did not seem to hear. Her eyes were rolling, and she began speaking again.

"Martin Timms have heap much trouble come. Black demons mad at him. He loseum much money. He payum for lies he told. People will hateum."

"Get away from here!" Timms snapped. "Can't a man have a little private talk without being pestered by you?"

"Bad luck demons on your shoulder," Half Moon continued. "No takeum your silver. Bad luck money. You tellum lies about other man."

Timms sprang to his feet. But his sudden movement did not frighten Half Moon. The old squaw had caught Doreen's signal, turned abruptly, bent her head and waddled away.

"Confounded nuisance!" Timms said. "Now, Doreen, as I was saying—"

"I'll do some thinking," Doreen said, smiling at him faintly. "It's time for my roping stunt. Oh, Martin, I wonder if you'd do something for me?"

"Anything within my power," he promised, his eyes glowing.

"When I rope men on the track—you know. It's generally a couple of stupid cowboys. If you'd help—"

"I'd be proud to have you rope me, Doreen."

They got back to the track as the chief judge announced Doreen. She got into her saddle and rode out upon the track in front of the grandstand, waving at the crowd in answer to their cheers.

The attendants had everything ready for her. She began roping galloping riders, singly, two or three at a time. She went into the arena, ran down and roped a calf, and a Brahma steer which certainly didn't want to be roped. The air rocked with the crowd's cheers.

Then she returned to the track in front of the grandstand. She had been roping moving targets, and now the time had come to rope standing targets from the saddle with her pony at a run.

As she returned to the track, passing through the gate from the arena, she saw Joe standing to one side of the gate. Doreen smiled at him and swerved her pony. She bent from the saddle so she could speak to him without others overhearing.

"Watch and listen, honey," she said. "I've got our little problem solved, I think."

"Doreen, a lot of folks think I'm a thief."

"You forget that kind of thoughts and get ready to win that bucking contest."

SHE rode out upon the track, acknowledged the cheers, motioned to the attendants and rode down past the grandstand. Two cowboys stood side by side in front of the grandstand. With her pony at a run and her noose swinging over her head, Doreen came down the track while the crowd howled at the pretty picture she made.

The noose shot out and she roped the pair easily, jerked the noose taut, stopped her pony by skidding him at just the right moment to keep from upsetting the men she had roped. The rope was tossed aside, Doreen pulled it in, and ran a noose again.

She gestured, and Martin Timms, smiling, stood out in the middle of the track. Doreen made her announcement:

"Mr. Timms has been kind enough to aid me in this experiment. I am going to use two ropes and rope him with both while my pony is at a gallop."

There was a feat! The crowd cheered, and Doreen rode up the track and worked her ropes until she was having a running noose at the end of a rope held in either hand.

She kneed her trained pony and he broke into a run. Down the track she came, the two nooses circling and missing each other, and as she passed Martin Timms she cast them both. They settled around his body and were jerked taut. Doreen stopped her pony in time to keep from jerking Timms off his feet, yet kept the ropes tight.

The crowd cheered. But this time Doreen did not loosen the ropes so they could be cast aside and pulled in.

"Martin Timms!" she shouted, so that the crowd could hear, "you have charged Joe Finley with theft. I have evidence that the charge is false. Last night you were overheard talking to two of your hired men. You said you had framed Joe, that you would disgrace him, that you would wreck his nerves so he would lose the bucking contest, on which you have bet a lot of money on Ed Panlon, the Box Cross rider!"

"Doreen, stop your nonsense!" Timms called.

He tugged at the ropes, but she backed her pony and kept the ropes taut.

"Tell the crowd the truth!" she ordered. "I love Joe Finley. I know he is innocent. I know how you have tried to trick him. Martin Timms, tell the truth! If you do not, I will spur my pony now and drag you around the arena with my pony at a run!"

Gasps came from the crowd. Nobody who saw and heard thought Doreen was not sincere in that threat.

"Make some quick talk!" she shouted. "You imitation man!"

She swerved the pony, and Timms was forced to run a few steps quickly to keep from being thrown to the ground.

"Wait—wait!" he begged. "It—it was all a joke. Joe didn't steal the money. I was playing a trick—the betting—"

A roar came from the grandstand and the men around the tracks. It was a roar of denunciation, of contempt. It told Martin Timms that he would do well to sell his properties and quit the Indian Springs district as soon as possible.

Doreen loosened the ropes. Timms cast

HOME-STUDY BRINGS BIGGER PAY

Don't be caught napping when Opportunity knocks. Prepare for advancement and more money by training *now* for the job ahead. *Free 48-Page Books Tell How.* Write for the book on the business field you like—or mail us this ad with your name and address in the margin. *Now,* please.

☐Higher Accountancy ☐Business Management
☐Traffic Management ☐Salesmanship
☐Law—Degree of LL.B. ☐Expert Bookkeeping
☐Commercial Law ☐C. P. A. Coaching
☐Stenotypy (Machine Shorthand)

G. I. APPROVED

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY
A Correspondence Institution
Dept. 12329-R 417 So. Dearborn St. Chicago 5

GUM GRIPPER
Tightens FALSE TEETH or NO COST

Lasts from 3 to 6 Months!
New discovery makes loose dental plates fit snug and comfortable for months—almost like having your own teeth again. For uppers and lowers.

Easy to Apply at Home...Simply squeeze some "GUM GRIPPER" evenly on your denture, put plate in your mouth where it sets and hardens in few minutes. No heat—no fuss—no muss. Will not harm any denture.

SEND NO MONEY...
Order a tube today, for only $1.00 (deposit with your own postman). Each application of "GUM GRIPPER" guaranteed to last from 3 to 6 months and delight you completely or your money will be cheerfully refunded.

GUM GRIPPER, INC.
127 N. Dearborn St., Dept. 506, Chicago 12, Ill.

SHORTHAND in 6 Weeks at Home

Famous Speedwriting system. No signs or symbols; uses ABC's. Easy to learn; easy to write and transcribe. Fast preparation for a job. Surprisingly low cost. 100,000 taught by mail. Used in leading offices and Civil Service. Write for free booklet to:

Speedwriting
Dept. 9012-6, 55 W. 42 St., New York 18

What To Do For Pains of ARTHRITIS Try This Free

If you have never used "Rosse Tabs" for pains or arthritis, neuritis, rheumatism, we want you to try them at our risk. We will send you a full-size package from which you are to use 24 Tabs FREE. If not astonished at the palliative relief which you enjoy from your sufferings, return the package and you owe us nothing. We mean it! SEND NO MONEY. Just send name and address and we will rush your Tabs by return mail. ROSSE PRODUCTS CO., Dept. 727, 2708 Farwell Ave., Chicago 45, Illinois.

them off and ran away from the track. Doreen drew the ropes in and coiled them, and rode through the gate into the arena. There she found Joe and her father and Joe's uncle waiting. Sheriff Shane was there, too.

"Good girl, Doreen!" the sheriff said. "That evidence?"

"Indian evidence only. I had to run a bluff to get Timms to confess."

"I've got a job right this minute, arrestin' Timms for false chargin'," the sheriff declared. He hurried away.

Then Doreen was off her pony and in Joe's arms, not caring who saw her lift her lips for his kiss.

"You go ahead and win that bucking contest, honey," she whispered. "That'll settle everything."

Half Moon was suddenly beside them.

"Singing Rope make heap good squaw," she hinted.

"I think so," Joe said, and kissed Doreen again.

IN THE ARENA

(Continued from page 8)

ducer and arena director, Jim Eskew, Jr., assistant arena director, Buddy Mefford and Howard Baker the judges, Bob Matthews arena secretary, Mary Louise Eskew timer, Clay Hockman announcer.

Brahma Rogers, John Crethers and Jack Knapp were the clowns. Trick riders were Johnny Chapman, Jimmy Miller, Alva Clemants, Beryl Jackson, Billie Shaw, Mary Clemants and Adair Shaw.

JE Ranch Rodeo Results

The final results in bareback bronc riding were: First, Paul Bond; second, Larry Finley; third, Jimmy Sloan; fourth, Roy Calloway.

Jim Snively beat the field to the final wire in calf roping, Amye Gamblin was second, Irby Mundy was third and Buddy Mefford was fourth.

Larry Finley and Gene Pruitt tied for first and second places in the saddle bronc riding, Gerald Roberts was third and Claude Morris was fourth. Earl Blevins copped the steer wrestling, Buck Dowell was second, Bill Hancock was third and Bill McGuire was fourth.

Spike Bronson was top man in the bull riding, Red Wilmer was second, Jim White-

(Turn to page 102)

JEWELRY BARGAINS

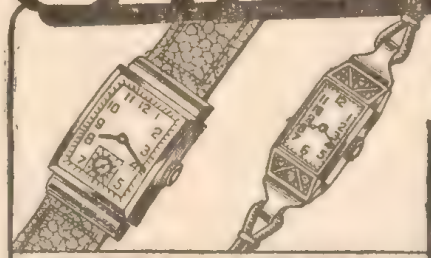
EXQUISITE JEWELRY

Latest styles. Buy now at our low prices. Join our thousands of satisfied customers.

SEND NO MONEY!

Satisfaction Guaranteed or Money Back. Simply pay postman C.O.D. on arrival, plus postage and 20% Federal Tax. You'll be delighted! Send all orders to

International Diamond Co., 2435 Indiana Ave., Dept. 1358, Chicago 16, Ill.



MEN'S SWISS WATCH
Sturdy — dependable. Leather band. Guaranteed 1 Jewel movement. Chrome metal case.
No. N-2 Price 8.45

LADIES' SWISS WATCH
Exquisite. Accurate. Beautiful chrome metal case. Guaranteed 1 Jewel Movement.
No. N-1 Price 9.95

ENLARGED TO SHOW DETAIL

14K GOLD BRIDAL PAIR
Set with 8 brilliant Genuine chip diamonds. Engraved. Sizes 4½ to 8 (larger, 75c per ring extra).
N-4 each 7.85 2 for 14.95

14K GOLD BRIDAL PAIR
Set with 14 Sparkling Genuine chip diamonds. Engraved. Sizes 4½ to 8 (larger, 75c per ring extra).
N-5 8.85 each 2 for 16.50

10K GOLD BRIDAL PAIR
Set with 6 sparkling Genuine chip diamonds in gold hearts. Sizes 4½ to 8 (larger, 75c per ring extra).
N-6 5.95 each 2 for 9.95

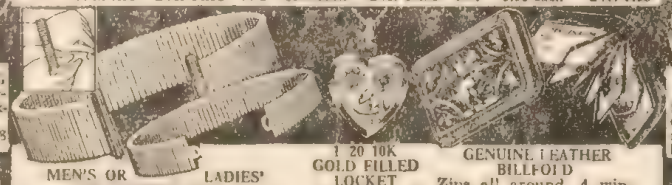
LADIES' 17 JEWEL SWISS WATCH
10K Rolled Gold Plate top — stainless back. Reliable. Guaranteed.
No. N-60 Price 24.75

MEN'S 15 JEWEL SWISS WATCH
Sweep-hand. Radium dial. Water-proof. Guaranteed. Accurate.
No. N-55 Price 20.75

10K GOLD DINNER RING
5 Genuine chip diamonds.
No. N-14 9.95

INITIAL RING
Engraved. Gold color metal. Give initial.
No. N-68 1.49

CLUSTER RING
Gold color sterling. 10 sparkling stones.
No. N-59 2.98



MEN'S OR LADIES' EXPANSION WATCH BAND
Fits most any watch. It S-T-R-E-T-C-H-E-S. Gold color, or Stainless steel. Comfortable.
No. N-15 Price 1.98

1-20 10K GOLD FILLED LOCKET
Has Genuine chip diamond. 2 photo space. 3 tone gold.
No. N-46 5.95

GENUINE LEATHER BILLFOLD
Zips all around. 4 windows, back bill space, snap change purse, side pockets. Plenty space. Western design. Black or Brown.
No. N-53 Price 2.98

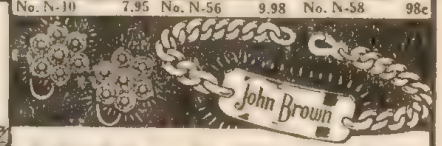
10K Gold Birthstone Ring
Simulated. 2 Genuine chip diamonds. Dazzling.
No. N-10 7.95

Men's 10K Gold Birthstone Ring
2 Genuine chip diamonds. Simulated Stone.
No. N-56 9.98

PICTURE RING.
Insert any photo. Beautifully engraved gold color metal.
No. N-58 98c

Personalized Expansion Bracelet
Names Engraved Free
It S-T-R-E-T-C-H-E-S. Choice of lovely plastic colors.
No. N-44 Price 98c

Arrow Earrings
Gives appearance of piercing ears. Gold color.
No. N-65 98c



Sparkling Earrings
14 sparkling stones. Adorable.
No. N-66 98c

Beautiful Identification Bracelet
Engraved free. For ladies or men. Sturdy. Handsome.
No. N-20 Price 1.98

HANDSOME MEN'S WATCH
Guaranteed 1 Jewel. Gold color engraved metal case. Swiss. Accurate. Dependable. 1-20 10K gold filled (expansion band).
No. N-62B Price $16.50

Ladies' Fine Swiss Watch
It's elegant! Guaranteed 7 Jewel. Accurate. Beautiful engraved chrome metal case. Dainty. Beautifully styled. Fine Quality.
No. N-17 Price 14.95

BRIDAL SET
11 Large Sparkling Simulated Diamonds. Gorgeous! Engraved mounting. Latest design.
No. N-41B Price $2.98

MEN'S SWISS WRIST WATCH
Beautifully styled. Radium dial. Sweep-hand. Guaranteed 4 Jewel. Accurate. Smart chrome metal case. Leather band.
No. N-16 Price 11.45

LADIES' 7 JEWEL WATCH
Guaranteed engraved gold color metal case. Perfect time keeper. (1-20 10K gold filled band).
No. N-61B $19.75

Send All Orders To INTERNATIONAL DIAMOND CO. 2435 Indiana Ave., Dept. 1358, Chicago 16, Ill.

Free for Asthma

If you suffer with attacks of Asthma so terrible you choke and gasp for breath, if restful sleep is impossible because of the struggle to breathe, if you feel the disease is slowly wearing your life away, don't fail to send at once to the Frontier Asthma Co. for a free trial of a remarkable method. No matter where you live or whether you have any faith in any remedy under the Sun, send for this free trial. If you have suffered a lifetime and tried everything you could learn of without relief; even if you are utterly discouraged, do not abandon hope but send today for this free trial. It will cost you nothing. Address:

FRONTIER ASTHMA CO.

257-W Frontier Bldg.

462 Niagara Street Buffalo 1, N. Y.

SIMPLE EASY INVENTION
TRIMS HAIR AT HOME!
SAVES BARBER BILLS
Trims hair as it combs! Easy! Quick! Keeps men's, women's children's hair trim, neat, freshly-cut looking all the time! Trims, tapers, thins out uneven hair. Use like ordinary comb. Safe. Simple.
No experience required. Fine for legs, underarms! Sells like wild!
SAMPLES FOR AGENTS Sample offer sent immediately to all who send name at once. A penny postal will do SEND NO MONEY. Just your name. KRISTEE CO., 1473 Bar St., AKRON, OHIO

do you WORRY?

Why worry and suffer any longer if we can help you? Try a Brooks Patented Air Cushion. This marvelous appliance for most forms of reducible rupture is GUARANTEED to bring YOU heavenly comfort and security—day and night—at work and play—or it costs you NOTHING. Thousands happy. Light, neat-fitting. No hard pads or springs. For men, women, and children. Durable, cheap. **Sent on trial** to prove it. Not sold in stores. Beware of imitations. Write for Free Book on Rupture, no-risk trial order plan, and proof of results. All Correspondence Confidential.

Brooks Company, 382-G State Street, Marshall, Mich.

The prayers of the most worthy people often fail. Why? The unworthy often have the greatest health, success, riches and happiness. The best, smartest, and most industrious people often have only pain, poverty and sorrow. Why? Thirty years ago, in Forbidden Tibet, behind the highest mountains in the world, a young Englishman found the answers to these questions. His eyes were opened by the strangest mystic he met during his twenty-one years of travels in the Far East. Sick then, he regained health. Poor then, he acquired wealth and world-wide professional honors. He wants to tell the whole world what he learned, and offers to send a 9,000-word treatise, FREE, to everyone who asks promptly. It is a first step to the POWER that KNOWLEDGE gives. There is no obligation. Write for YOUR FREE COPY today.

INSTITUTE of MENTALPHYSICS, Dept. 648-A
213 South Hobart Blvd., Los Angeles 4, Calif.

man was third, Roy Calloway was fourth and Gerald Roberts fifth.

From Washington, the JE went on to Cleveland, Ohio; Toronto, Canada; Pittsburgh, Pa., making four stands with Autry as guest star, after which Autry returned to the West Coast. More detailed news of the JE will follow further along in this department.

Livestock Exposition

The Grand National Livestock Exposition, Horse Show and Rodeo, resumes operations November 16th to 24th, at the Cow Palace on the San Francisco-San Mateo County line. It will be the second running of this event, which was called off during the war, and makes another late California show presenting an opportunity for the boys to add some late points to their standings before the close of the season.

One of the finest parades ever seen in El Paso, Texas, was staged during the El Paso Livestock Show and Rodeo. Hundreds mounted on horseback, many interesting floats and novel participants, plus a large delegation from Jaurez across the Rio Grande, gave the parade a touch of "South of the Border effect".

The Gila River Round-Up, Safford, Arizona, drew excellent crowds and was a fast, snappy performance. Carl Dossey and Harry Knight were the producers, Dub Phillips and Bill McGuire the judges, Gwen Jordan and Mildred Morris timers.

The results in calf roping were: First, Fred Darnell; second, Bill Rush; third, Ken Gunter; fourth, Clarence Darnell. Tater Decker won the steer wrestling, Homer Pettigrew was second, Bud Linderman was third and Hugh Bennett fourth.

Shirley Hussey won the saddle bronc riding, Larry Finley was second, Bud Linderman was third and Frank Finley fourth. Jimmy Hazen won the bull riding, Dick Griffith was second, Manuel Esnos was third and Roy Calloway was fourth.

Maynard Gaylor and Bud Parker composed the team that won the team roping, Lex Connelly and Jack Finley were second, Hugh Bennett and Dee Hinton were third and Buck Sorrells and Bud Parker fourth.

Doff Aber Passes On

We have just received word that Doff Aber, nationally known bronc rider who won the bronc riding championship at Cheyenne Frontier Days in 1939 and 1942, and the Rodeo Association of America bronc riding championship for the season of 1941 and 1942, was instantly killed in a tractor accident near Fort Collins, Colorado, about 10:30 P.M.,

Monday, May 6th.

According to the story of the accident Doff and his wife and sister were visiting his neighbor rancher when they decided to try out the new tractor, a "weasel" in army slang. They had gone about a mile from the house when on account of a slick mud surface, the tractor skidded and overturned down a thirty-foot embankment. Doff was killed instantly and his sister Margaret was seriously injured. His neighbor, Harry Harbison, escaped serious injury.

The Big Show

The New York Madison Square Garden World's Championship Rodeo dates were set for September 25th to October 27th, this being the first year that it has opened in September. The usual opening date is around October 3rd. At the time of this magazine's preparation the rodeo has not yet opened, but it should be in full swing when you read this. The total prize list calls for $124,680.00, with $16,440.00 in bareback bronc riding, $22,080.00 in calf roping, $22,560.00 in saddle bronc riding, $22,560.00 in steer wrestling, $22,560.00 in bull riding, $12,480.00 in wild cow milking and $6,480.00 in the wild horse race.

The Boston Garden Rodeo was planned for Boston, Mass., from October 30th to November 11th, with a total of 18 performances. The total prize list calls for $27,000.00. Gene Autry will be co-producer and guest star of both the Madison Square Garden and Boston rodeos.

Roy Rogers will be co-producer and guest star at the Arena Rodeo in Philadelphia, Pa., the St. Louis Arena Rodeo at St. Louis, Mo., and the Chicago World's Championship Rodeo, Chicago Stadium. The Chicago show dates were set for October 10th to October 27th.

Birmingham Rodeo

The recent Birmingham Fat Cattle Show Rodeo, at Birmingham, Alabama, was sponsored by the Agriculture Committee of the Chamber of Commerce. Verne Elliott was the producer. There were no finals in the bareback bronc riding but the winners of the last go-round were: First, Buster Ivory; Second, Frank Duce; Third, Manuel Enos; Fourth, Wag Blessing.

Everett Shaw won the calf roping finals, Jess Goodspeed was second, Shoat Webster was third and Dick Truitt was fourth. Vic Schwarz copped the saddle bronc riding, Bill

[*Turn page*]

THIS MAN'S JOB

Pays well in good or bad times . . . He's a

FINGER PRINT EXPERT

Learn this fascinating profession right at home!

I.A.S. has taught thousands of men and women this exciting, profitable, pleasant work. Let us teach you, too, in your own home, during spare time. You should have no doubt of the possibilities in this fine field. Think of it . . .

53% of all identification bureaus in America employ I. A. S. graduates or students. This fact alone is ample evidence of the thorough, practical training given. What others have done, you too, should be able to do.

Here Is Proof That It Is NOT *Difficult*

Of the six finger prints at the left, two of them are alike. See if you can find the matching prints. Of course, there is much more to learn than the mere matching of finger prints, but you get the idea.

Fit Yourself Now for a Post-War Job

Instead of being just one of thousands of men looking for peacetime jobs, prepare now to obtain a position that pays well from the start and offers a fine future throughout a lifetime. Send today (stating age) for our great Free Book. Use the coupon!

INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE
Dept. 7969, 1920 Sunnyside Ave., Chicago 40, Ill.

Send for FREE copy of "THE BLUE BOOK OF CRIME"

INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE
Dept. 7969, 1920 Sunnyside Ave., Chicago 40, Ill.

Gentlemen: Without obligation, send me the "Blue Book of Crime" and complete list of Identification Bureaus employing I.A.S. students or graduates, also information regarding cost and terms.
(Literature sent *only* to persons stating age.)

Name..... Age.....

Address .....

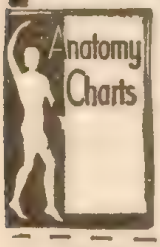
RFD or Zone..... State.....

Learn this Profitable Profession

IN 90 DAYS AT HOME

MONEY-MAKING CAREER OPEN to MEN and WOMEN, 18 to 50

Hundreds of men and women between 18 and 50 make $10 to $20 in a single day giving Scientific Swedish Massage and Hydro-Therapy treatments. There is big demand from doctors, hospitals, sanatoriums and clubs. Graduates earn large full time incomes from these or in private practice in their own offices. Others make good money from home treatments given in spare time. Learn this interesting, money-making profession in your own home, through our home study course. Same instructors as in our nationally known resident school. You can win independence and prepare for future security by qualifying for our Diploma. Course can be completed in 3 to 4 months. Many earn while they learn. Begin your training at once.



Anatomy Charts & Booklet FREE

Enroll now and we will include, at no extra cost, many needed supplies. Fit yourself to help meet growing demand for Scientific Swedish Massage. Send the coupon at once for complete details. Anatomy Charts and 32-page Illustrated Booklet, FREE, postpaid.

THE COLLEGE OF SWEDISH MASSAGE
Dept. 663R, 100 East Ohio St., Chicago 11, Illinois

Please send me FREE and postpaid, Anatomy Charts, 32-page Booklet and complete details on Home Training.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

TEST THIS FREE FOR

DISTURBED SLEEP

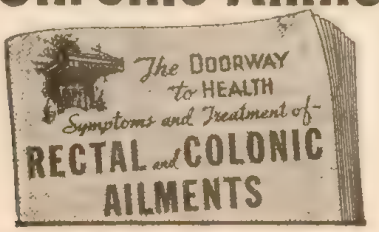
Don't disturb your sleep by getting up many times nightly due to irritation of Bladder or Urinary Tract. Learn now about PALMO TABLETS — and try them at our own risk. All you do is simply test 20 tablets FREE out of the full-size package we send you. If palliative relief doesn't surprise and delight you, return the extra tablets and you pay nothing for the trial. No C.O.D. or postage. SEND NO MONEY. Mail name and address today and we will send your PALMO TABLETS at once — postpaid!

H. D. POWERS CO., Dept. 12-895, Box 135, Battle Creek, Mich.

BE A DETECTIVE

WORK HOME or TRAVEL. Experience unnecessary. **DETECTIVE** Particulars FREE. Write to **GEO. R. H. WAGNER**, 125 W. 86th St., N. Y.

FREE BOOK — On Chronic Ailments



40-page FREE BOOK explains the causes and effects of these ailments. Write today — Thornton & Minor Clinic, Suite 1256, 926 McGee St., Kansas City, Mo.

Linderman was second, Buster Ivory was third and Jim Like fourth.

Hub Whiteman was best man in the steer wrestling, Dick Truitt was second, Steve Heacock was third and Jim Like fourth. Marvin Shoulders was top man in the bull riding, Dick Griffith took second place, Todd Whatley was third and Wart Baughman was fourth.

The Last Roundup

Eddie McCarty, rancher and rodeo stock contractor of Chugwater, Wyoming, died of a heart attack recently. He was a great bronc rider in his younger days, and at one time owned one of the biggest strings of rodeo stock in the country, among which were the two nationally known bucking horses Midnight and Five Minutes to Midnight.

McCarty won the bronc riding championship of Cheyenne Frontier Days in 1919. He furnished the stock for Tex Austin's London Rodeo in 1924. He was 58 years old.

Rodeo Fans Election

At a stockholders annual meeting of the Rodeo Fans of America, in the national arena at Waverly, New York, officers were elected to serve for one year. They are H. M. Barnes, of Binghamton, N. Y., president; Foghorn Clancy, of Waverly, executive vice president; Robt. G. Hotchkiss, of Endicott, N. Y., treasurer; Jo Newton, of Waverly, secretary.

Dr. Leo R. Brady, retiring president, was elected president emeritus. The organization is a national one and is composed of admirers of the cowboy and his sports. For the past five years the annual convention has been held during the rodeo at Madison Square Garden, but this year the annual convention and banquet was scheduled to take place during the Roy Rogers Rodeo in Philadelphia.

Cleveland Results

Col. Jim Eskew's JE Ranch Rodeo at the Arena in Cleveland, Ohio, with Gene Autry as guest star, drew excellent crowds. Col. Eskew was the producer and arena director, Jim Eskew, Jr., assistant arena director, Howard Baker and Bill McGuire judges, Mary Louise Eskew timer, Bob Matthews arena secretary and Clay Hockman announcer.

The final results in calf roping were: First, Jim Snively; Second, Amye Gamblin; Third, Dee Burk; Fourth, Pat Parker. Jerry Ambler won the saddle bronc riding, Gerald Roberts was second, Paul Gould was third and Bill Hancock fourth.

Frank Finley was top man in the steer

wrestling, Earl Blevins was second, Larry Finley was third and Bill McGuire was fourth. Larry Finley won the bareback bronc riding, Ralph Collier was second, Gerald Roberts was third and Jimmy Schumacher was fourth. Buttons Yonnick was top man in the bull riding, Delbert Wise was second, G. K. Lewellen was third and Gerald Roberts fourth.

Col. Jim Eskew shipped in a carload of wild, raw broncs from Montana for the bareback bronc riding contests at Cleveland, and in the bunch were some outstanding bucking horses. In fact they were such buckers that they bucked off many of the best riders and there were few who started in the contest that got to the finals.

From Cleveland the JE went to Canada for the rodeo at Maple Leaf Garden, with practically the same group of contestants as were at Cleveland making the trip. Gene Autry was also the guest star at Toronto. The final results in saddle bronc riding were: First, Jerry Ambler; Second and third prizes, split between Gerald Roberts and Claude Morris; Fourth place, split between Gene Pruitt and G. K. Lewellen.

Jim Snively won the calf roping, Bill Hancock was second, Irby Mundy was third, and

[*Turn page*]

SEE the World in Pictures!

ENTERTAINING, UP-TO-THE-MINUTE PHOTO FEATURES ON EVERY PAGE!

NOW ON SALE—10c AT ALL STANDS

Twice as Much LIFE INSURANCE

Policy Pays These Benefits During FIRST 5 YEAR Period!

$3360.00 Travel Accidental Loss of Life

$2240.00 Automobile Accidental Loss of Life

$1120.00 Loss of Life due to Any Sickness, Any Accident or Natural causes

COSTS ONLY $1.00 A MONTH

This is your opportunity to obtain Life Insurance backed by Legal Reserves, that provides genuine protection, not only for your loved ones but yourself, too! Pioneer THREE-WAY Life Insurance Policy provides CASH for YOU in emergencies . . . CASH for your FAMILY when you pass on. Offers features found in much more expensive policies!

10 POINT PROTECTION

Policy pays FULL benefits for Loss of Life due to (1) Natural Causes. (2) Any Sickness. (3) Any Accident. Pays DOUBLE for (4) Auto Accident Death. Pays TRIPLE for (5) Travel Accident Death. In addition policy provides these benefits: (6) Loan Values. (7) Cash Surrender Values. (8) Paid Up Whole Life Insurance. (9) Paid Up Extended Insurance. (10) Automatic Non-Forfeiture Protection.

SEND FOR FREE DETAILS—NO OBLIGATION

Amount of insurance according to your age when Policy is issued. Benefits shown above are based on age 21; other ages in proportion. Pays FULL BENEFITS, regardless of age attained, as stated in Policy! No automatic age cancellation. Issued to Men, Women, Children in good health, ages 10 to 65 years. ACT AT ONCE! The sooner you apply, the more insurance you may have! Information Mailed FREE. Don't wait; write TODAY!

PIONEER LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY
5090 Insurance Exch. Bldg. • Rockford, Ill.

INVENTORS

Learn now—without obligation—how to protect and sell your invention. Secure Free "Patent Guide," containing complete information about patent procedure and selling inventions. Write

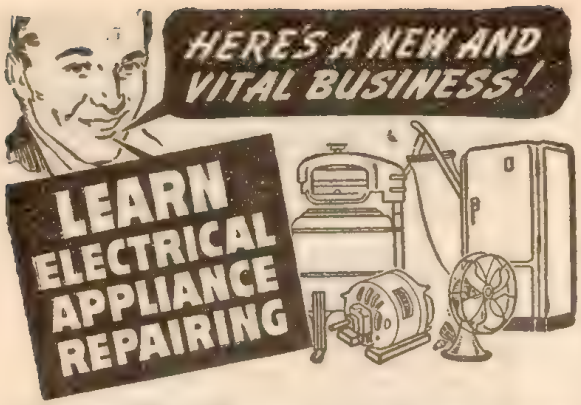
CLARENCE A. O'BRIEN & HARVEY JACOBSON
Registered Patent Attorneys
68-L Adams Building • Washington 4, D. C.

MIND POWER

A FREE BOOK

Develop your personal, creative power! Awaken the silent, sleeping forces in your own consciousness. Become Master of your own life. Push aside all obstacles with a new energy you have overlooked. The Rosicrucians know how, and will help you apply the greatest of all powers in man's control. Create health and abundance for yourself. Write for *Free* book, "The Mastery of Life." It tells how you may receive these teachings for study and use. It means the dawn of a new day for you. . . Address: Scribe K.W.A.

The ROSICRUCIANS
SAN JOSE (AMORC) CALIFORNIA



Offers Big Money — Independence

If you are mechanically inclined—can hold and use tools it will pay you to learn electrical appliance repairing. Operate from your garage, basement, etc. Work as many hours as you wish—the appliance repairman is his own boss. On many types of repairs it is usual for a repairman to charge on the basis of $5.00 to $6.00 an hour!

No Previous Experience Needed

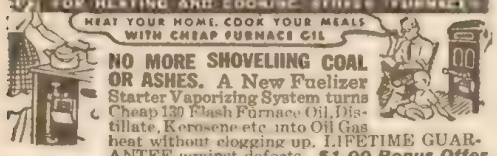
Profusely illustrated our new course shows you in simple, easy to understand language plus drawings and photographs, how to make each repair on refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, motors, fans, irons, etc., etc. Explains and gives you a working knowledge of electricity, welding, nickel plating, etc. Shows you how to build the power tools you need and how to solicit and keep business coming to you. Not a theory course but an honest to goodness practical course written by and used by repairmen the country over. Price of course is so low that the savings on your own household appliances will pay for it. Act now! Send today for FREE literature. **Christy Supply Co., 2835 N. Central Ave., Dept. D-2104, Chicago 34, Illinois.**

USED Correspondence Courses

Complete HOME-STUDY COURSES and self-instruction textbooks, slightly used. Rented, sold, exchanged. All subjects. 100% satisfaction. Cash paid for used courses. Full details & 100-page illustrated bargain catalog **Free.** Write Nelson Co., 1149 S. Wabash Av., Dept. 2-06, Chicago 5, Ill.

PATENT **FOR INVENTORS**—detailed information on how to secure patent protection for your invention will be mailed promptly upon request. **Victor J. Evans & Co., Merlin M. Evans, Registered Patent Attorney, 107-P Merlin Bldg., Washington 6, D. C.**

NEW CHEAP OIL BURNER
FOR HEATING AND COOKING STOVES AND FURNACES
HEAT YOUR HOME, COOK YOUR MEALS WITH CHEAP FURNACE OIL

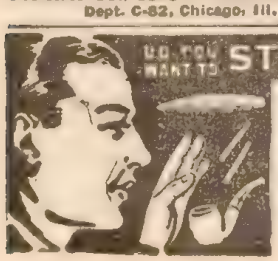


NO MORE SHOVELING COAL OR ASHES. A New Fuelizer Starter Vaporizing System turns Cheap 130 Flash Furnace Oil, Distillate, Kerosene etc. into Oil Gas heat without clogging up. LIFETIME GUARANTEE against defects. ***$1.00 Bonus Offer for Testing.*** We will let you try it in your own stove or furnace for one month. Get yours for introducing. Big Profits QUICK. Be first. Send in your name TODAY.
NORTHWEST MFG. CO., 574-P 5th, Mitchell, So. Dakota

Fit-Rite **makes False Teeth TIGHT**

Makes loose dental plates fit snugly and comfortably.
LASTS for MONTHS!

Simply squeeze on dental plate and put it in your mouth. Hardens and becomes part of plate. Money-back guarantee.
FREE Generous package of Dental Plate Cleanser with each order. Send $1.00 or mailed parcel post collect.
Fit-Rite Co., 1573 Milwaukee Ave. Dept. C-82, Chicago, Ill.



Banish the craving for tobacco as thousands have with Tobacco Redeemer. Write for free booklet telling of injurious effect of tobacco and of a treatment which has relieved many men. Caution: Use only as directed.
30 Years in Business
FREE BOOK
THE NEWELL COMPANY 153 Clayton, Sta., St. Louis 5, Mo.

Jim Eskew, Jr., fourth. Jim Whiteman was top man in the steer wrestling, Clayton Hart was second, with third and fourth split between Claude Morris and Mike Fisher. Paul Bond was best man in the bareback bronc riding, Carl Williams was second, Jimmy Sloan and Ralph Collier split third and fourth places.

Jim Whiteman also won the bull riding, Gerald Roberts was second, Red Wilmer was third and Delbert Wise was fourth.

The Toronto show had the same officials as the Cleveland show with the exception that the judges were Steve Heacock and Ole Rice.

The Pittsburgh Event

From Toronto the JE jumped back to Pittsburgh, Pa., where the final results in saddle bronc riding were: First, Jerry Ambler; Second, Gerald Roberts; Third, Ralph Collier; Fourth, Frank Finley.

Jim Whiteman outrode the field to win first in the bull riding, Howard Baker was second, Delbert Wise was third and Gerald Roberts fourth. Pat Parker was best man in the calf roping, Buddy Mefford was second, Irby Mundy was third and Bud Parker fourth. Steve Heacock copped the steer wrestling, Jim Whiteman was second, Jack Jackson was third and Claude Morris was fourth. Doug Linderman was best man in the bareback bronc riding, Bud Spealman second, Larry Finley was third and Jimmy Schumacher fourth.

At the close of the Pittsburgh show Gene Autry returned to the West Coast again to enter the production of pictures and the JE Ranch Rodeo was billed to play New Haven, Conn., but the railroad strike caused the cancellation of the New Haven date.

Well, cowhands, guess that is about all we have time to give out from In The Arena this session, so for the present I will be saying adios.

—FOGHORN CLANCY

OUR NEXT ISSUE

WHEN she rode into town from her brother's ranch to attend the rodeo, Natalie Rodell did not realize that the arena event would bring her both love and heartbreak! As she left her horse at the livery barn and strolled around window-shopping she was attracted by an oil painting of Lance Durret, the rodeo's most famous rider.

Bill Anson, the storekeeper, saw Natalie gazing at the painting in the window and coaxed her into the shop. He showed her a large costume jewelry locket which framed

Lance Durret's face.

"Only a dollar for him, Natalie," Anson said. "Or the same for one with Hutton Wensley's picture. But I reckon you could have either of them men, if you'd a mind, instead of a picture!"

"I don't even know Lance Durret!" Natalie said, picking up the locket. "But I'll buy this."

She bought the locket and Anson was showing her how the catch worked when Hutton Wensley stalked in. The black-browed, sullen eyed rodeo star stared at the locket.

"What do you want with that trash, Natalie?" he demanded.

"You wouldn't call it trash if your picture was in it, Hutt," Natalie said. "Have you come back to Seguro as cross as you went away?"

His gesture was as impatient as his voice had been as he drew her aside from the group of customers who barged in.

"I'm not cross," he said. "Whose picture you got in there?"

When he saw Lance Durret's picture in the locket Hutt tried to take it away from Natalie, but she wouldn't let him.

She asked him to walk over to a pet shop

[*Turn page*]

EXCITING TRUE PICTURE-STORIES OF HEROISM AND ADVENTURE!

Recommended by Parents and Teachers

Now on Sale—Only 10c Everywhere

8 BIG BUILDING BOOKS

For EXAMINATION SEND NO MONEY

Learn to draw plans, estimate, be a live-wire builder, do remodeling, take contracting jobs. These 8 practical, profusely illustrated books cover subjects that will help you to get more work and make more money. Architectural design and drawing, estimating, steel square, roof framing, construction, painting and decorating, heating, air-conditioning, concrete forms and many other subjects are included.

BETTER JOBS — BETTER PAY

The postwar building boom is in full swing and trained men are needed. Big opportunities are always for MEN WHO KNOW HOW. These books supply quick, easily understood training and handy, permanent reference information that helps solve building problems.

UP-TO-DATE EDITION

These books are the most up-to-date and complete we have ever published on these many subjects.

Coupon Brings Eight Big Books For Examination

AMERICAN TECHNICAL SOCIETY Vocational Publishers since 1898
Dept. G949 Drexel at 58th Street Chicago 37, Ill.

You may ship me the Up-to-Date edition of your eight big books, "Building, Estimating and Contracting," without any obligation to buy. I will pay the delivery charges only, and if fully satisfied in ten days, I will send you $2.00, and after that only $3.00 a month, until the total price of only $34.80 is paid. I am not obligated in any way unless I keep the books.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

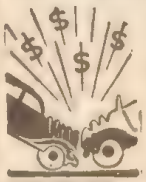
Please attach a letter stating your age, occupation, employer's name and address, and name and address of at least one business man as a reference. Men in service, also please give home address.

PICTURE RING $1.

Exquisite Picture Ring—made from any photo. **SEND NO MONEY!** Mail photo with paper strip for ring size. Pay postman only $1 plus postage. Hand tinted 25c extra. Photo returned with ring. Money back guarantee.

PICTURE RING CO. DEPT. E-26, SEND PHOTO AND RING SIZE NOW! CINCINNATI, OHIO

Get into Good Paying AUTO BODY *and* FENDER WORK



BIG DEMAND in Auto Body and Fender work. Start training now in your spare time at home for good pay work. Practical shop experience included. U.E.I. Training covers metal work, welding, painting, etc. Placement service—or we will show you how to start your own shop.

Behind U.E.I. TRAINING is a large national organization founded 1927.

Write today for Free Facts—No obligation

AUTO-CRAFTS DIVISION • UTILITIES ENGINEERING INSTITUTE
1314 BELDEN AVENUE, DEPT. X-7P, CHICAGO 14, ILLINOIS

BE A *Nurse*

MAKE $30-$40 A WEEK

Practical nurses are needed in every community... doctors rely on them... patients appreciate their cheerful, expert care. You can learn practical nursing at home in spare time. Course endorsed by physicians. 47th yr. Earn while learning. High School not required. Men, women, 18 to 60. Trial plan. Write now!

CHICAGO SCHOOL OF NURSING
Dept. 4211, 100 East Ohio Street, Chicago 11, Ill.
Please send free booklet and 16 sample lesson pages.
Name.....
City.....State..... Age.....

DRAW for MONEY!

Be An ARTIST!

PREPARE TODAY FOR THE FUTURE THAT LIES AHEAD

Trained Artists Are Capable of Earning $40, $60, $75 A WEEK

Use your spare time to prepare for a profitable Art Career! Start training at home, now!

It's pleasant and interesting to study Art the W. S. A. way. COMMERCIAL ART, DESIGNING, CARTOONING—all in one complete course. No previous Art experience necessary—we teach you step-by-step by our practical home study method well-known since 1914. Write today for information in FREE BOOK, "ART FOR PLEASURE AND PROFIT"—tells all about our course, material furnished, instruction service and commercial opportunities for you in art. STATE AGE.

Course Available Under G.I. Bill

WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF ART

Studio 6612C, 1115-15th St., N.W., Wash. 5, D.C.

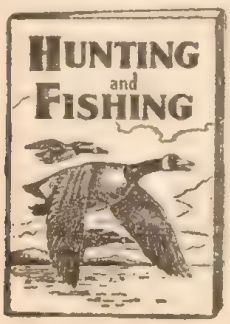
First time at anywhere near this low price! Authentic replica of romantic western saddle. Handsomely formed from solid Sterling Silver by Navajo Indian craftsmen. Massive style for men, dainty style for women. A gift of distinction. A pleasure to wear. Sent on approval.

SEND NO MONEY! Just clip this ad and mail with your name and address. Pay postman only $4.95 plus few cents postage on arrival; or send cash and we pay postage. Wear this sensational ring for 10 days. If not delighted, return for full refund. Specify for MAN or WOMAN and RING SIZE. Use cut-out band to determine size.

ARIZONA CRAFTSMEN Room 606, 1904 Farnam St. Omaha 2, Nebraska

LEARN MEAT CUTTING At Home—In Spare Time

Get into the vital meat industry. Concise, practical Home Training based on 25 years proven instruction method used at National's famous resident school. Prepares you for bigger pay as Meat Cutter, supervisor, market manager or more money in your own store. Go as rapidly as your spare time permits. Diploma. Start NOW to turn your spare hours into money. Send for FREE bulletin today. No obligation. National School of Meat Cutting, Inc., Dept. TG-21, Toledo 4, Ohio



HUNTING and FISHING

is a monthly magazine crammed full of hunting, fishing, camping, dog and boating stories and pictures, invaluable information about guns, fishing tackle, game law changes, best places to fish and hunt — countless ideas that will add more fun to your days afield.

Special Trial Offer

Send 25c in stamps or coin and we will send you Hunting & Fishing for six months.

HUNTING & FISHING MAGAZINE

287 Sportsman's Building

Boston Massachusetts

with her. Natalie wanted Hutt to see a talking parrot in the shop, but he wasn't much impressed by the bird. Natalie suddenly realized she did not like Hutton Wensley very much, even though a year ago he had asked her to marry him. She had told him she would think about it—but had made no definite promise.

There in the pet shop Natalie found herself wishing that Hutt would go away. She knew that Lance Durret was coming to the shop to pick up a package and she wanted to be alone when she met the other rodeo star.

The parrot bit Hutt's finger when he tried to get back a ring the bird had snatched from him. Hutt grabbed up a poker and started tormenting the bird while Natalie was at the rear of the shop.

Natalie came to the bird's rescue and slapped Hutt and made him drop the poker. He grabbed her and tried to kiss her, but the parrot got free and landed on Hutt's nose, scratching his face.

Hutt caught the bird and was about to pull his wings off.

"Don't hurt him!" Natalie cried. "Oh, don't hurt him."

Just as Hutt was choking the parrot Lance Durret rushed into the shop. He hit Hutt on the chin and the blow forced Wensley to release his grip on the bird. The two men started fighting, and it was a good bout while it lasted, but Lance finally knocked Hutt down.

Hutton was slightly stunned as he sprawled on the floor of the shop. He didn't move.

"You haven't killed him?" Natalie cried out anxiously.

"No." Lance said.

She flew to Hutton's side, but Durret was there before her. Dropping to one knee, he slipped a swift hand inside Hutton's shirt, then rose smiling reassuringly at her.

"Heart's drumming steadily," Lance said. "He'll be up shortly."

Hutt did recover quickly, and left, but there was no doubt that he hated Lance Durret. And he made a dangerous enemy.

Events move swiftly as the engrossing novel, HEARTS CONTENDING by Clinton Dangerfield, progresses. Natalie finds that she is in love with Lance and she believes that he is in love with her. Hutt then shows her a letter which Lance has apparently written to his wife. That Lance might be married comes as a terrific shock to Natalie.

But there are other complications of a more sinister nature. Natalie discovers that two badmen acting under Hutt's orders plan to murder Lance—and it is up to Natalie to rescue the man she still loves in spite of everything.

The way in which she goes to save Lance

and then finds herself trapped makes a smashing climax to this exciting yarn. HEARTS CONTENDING is a pulsating novel that will hold you breathless from start to finsh! It has all the glamour and excitement of a whirlwind rodeo ride! One of the big fiction events of the season!

But that's not the only fiction treat in store for you in the next issue of RODEO ROMANCES. EVERY INCH A CHAMPION, a swift-moving romantic novelet by Gladwell Richardson, will also appear as one of the featured stories. It's about the romance of Vina Garret and Thad Johnson, who are engaged.

One morning Thad invites Vina for a mysterious ride. They go south of Credo to the edge of a wide, sweeping valley. Nestled under the west rim is an old rambling adobe ranchhouse, hay fields and cattle grazing along the perennial water course.

"This here is to be our ranch, honey," he says. "Are you goin' to like it?"

"Of course, darling," Vina exclaims instantly, hugging him.

Thad is one of those strong men who do not talk much. Vina has worn his engagement ring during the two years they have been following the larger rodeos together,

[*Turn page*]

CALLING ALL AMERICANS!

To aid the citizen away from home in the armed forces and to provide health, welfare and recreation services for the citizen at home, USO and Community Chests of America are asking YOU to contribute.

Give generously and NOW to the USO and your Community Chest. In most of the cities and towns throughout the country, their campaigns are now united.

ELECTRICIANS
Get this Great Book FREE
For Merely Examining Coyne's NEW Pay Raising
7 Volume Set APPLIED ELECTRICITY

Here's a *brand new* set of electrical books to give you the "know how" on all branches of electricity from appliance repairing to D. C. and A. C. equipment, electrical refrigeration, etc. 8,000 subjects, 10,000 facts, latest methods all explained in easy to follow instructions. In order to prove how valuable and Practical this set of electrical books is I'm willing to give you a FREE copy of my book "150 Shop Prints and How to Read Them" just for looking over this set. Written by the Coyne Technical Staff and backed by 47 years' experience, this set has helped many ambitious electrical workers to bigger pay, better jobs & added opportunity.

OFFER LIMITED • ACT NOW! Here's my offer to you — if you act promptly. I'll send you the 7 volume set Applied Practical Electricity for 7 days FREE examination . . . together with the 150 Shop Print Book. Look the set over 7 days. If you like it send either $19.75 cash or send $4.00 after 7 days and $3.00 per month until $21 is paid. If you don't want the set, return it and YOU OWE NOTHING. In either event, however, you keep the 150 Shop Print Book absolutely FREE.

SEND NO MONEY! Coupon below is just a request to see the books free and to get my gift book for doing it. ACT—Send coupon Today!
Tecnical Book Div., COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL, 1500 S. Paulina Street, Dept. 86-T5 Chicago 12, Ill.

FREE BOOK Coupon

H.C. Lewis President
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL, Dept. 86-T8
500 SOUTH PAULINA STREET, CHICAGO 12, ILLINOIS

Send me that 7 volume set APPLIED PRACTICAL ELECTRICITY and your FREE gift of a copy of "150 Shop Prints and How to Read Them". I'll either return the set in 7 days and owe nothing or send you either $3 in 7 days and $3 a month until $21 is paid or $19.75 cash. **Regardless of whether or not I keep the 7 Volume Set the 150 Shop Prints is mine FREE as a Gift.**

NAME _____ AGE _____
ADDRESS _____
TOWN _____ ZONE _____ STATE _____

High School Course at Home — Many Finish in 2 Years

Go as rapidly as your time and abilities permit. Course equivalent to resident school work—prepares for college entrance exams. Standard H.S. texts supplied. Diploma. Credit for H. S. subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. High school education is very important for advancement in business and industry and socially. Don't be handicapped all your life. Be a High School graduate. Start your training now. Free Bulletin on request. No obligation.

American School, Dept. H-858, Drexel at 58th, Chicago 37

DETECTIVES
TRAINING—SECRET INVESTIGATIONS—FINGER PRINTS
Easy Method—Short Time. Home—Travel—Secret. Code-Booklet FREE — WRITE, INTERNATIONAL DETECTIVE SYSTEM, 1701-T Monroe St., N. E., Washington, D. C. 18.

If Ruptured Try This Out

Modern Protection Provides Great Comfort and Holding Security

Without Tortuous Truss Wearing

An "eye-opening" revelation in sensible and comfortable reducible rupture protection may be yours for the asking, without cost or obligation. Simply send name and address to William S. Rice, Inc., Dept. 1-B, Adams, N. Y., and full details of the new and different Rice Method will be sent you Free. Without hard flesh-gouging pads or tormenting pressure, here's a Support that has brought joy and comfort to thousands—by releasing them from Trusses with springs and straps that bind and cut. Designed to securely hold a rupture up and in where it belongs and yet give freedom of body and genuine comfort. For full information —write today!

New Lifetime Business

NO HOUSE-TO-HOUSE CANVASSING

FOUR $15 SALES DAILY PAY $270 WEEKLY

Here are some exceptional profits that have been reported by our men:—Ferrell, Georgia, made over 1,000 sales netting him $5 to $60 profit each sale. J. H. Robison, Penna., reported $1,047.58 net in 2 weeks. I. J. Keuper, Delaware, made $1,000 in a month. Big profits for high grade men installing new business specialty on free trial. Heavy cash savings made for thousands of U. S. firms. $4,707 savings in 3 months for one Kansas firm on $88.60 investment. Leading automotive concern reported $12,000 return on $187.50 investment. Nationally known companies among our customers. Smallest business or office buys. Customer guaranteed cash saving 10 times price paid. We furnish you portfolio of reference letters from foremost concerns. Closes the deal. Exclusive agency arrangements available now. Try this business without risking a dollar of your own money. *Write today for full information.*

F. E. ARMSTRONG, Dept. 4447-N, MOBILE, ALA.

Address all Pacific Coast mail to
P. O. Box 268, Dept. 4447-N, Monrovia, Calif.

"Fun and Self-Analysis Thru Handwriting" By Susan Bond. Will tell you how to do it the easy way.

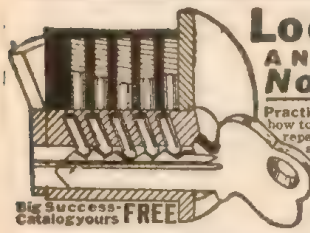
READ YOUR OWN HANDWRITING

Accurate! Loads of Fun! For Parties, Large or Small!! Loads of valuable information about yourself and your friends. NOT A FAD but an AUTHENTIC GUIDE based on thirty years of research. Send for your copy NOW. By Mail postpaid 50 CENTS. BOND FEATURES. DEPT. B. P.O. BOX 148. NEWARK 2. N. J.

TOOTHACHE? due to Cavity

GET QUICK AMAZING RELIEF by placing Dent's Tooth Gum—or Drops—in cavity of aching tooth. Cavity toothache frequently strikes when you can't see dentist. Be prepared! Ask your druggist for either complete aid package. Follow direction...

DENT'S TOOTH GUM TOOTH DROPS 25¢



Locksmithing AND KEY MAKING Now Made Easy!

Practical up-to-date course teaches you how to pick locks, de-code, make masterkeys, repair, install, service, etc. New self-instruction lessons for every handyman, a homeowner, carpenter, mechanic, service station operator, fix-it shop, hardware dealer, gunsmith. 53 easy illustrated lessons. Low price! Satisfaction! Free details, write NELSON CO., 1139 S. Wabash Ave., Dept. M06, Chicago 5

Big Success-Catalog yours FREE

WHY WEAR DIAMONDS

When diamond-dazzling Zircons from the mines of far-away mystic Siam are so *effective and inexpensive!* Thrilling beauty, stand acid, true backs, full of FIRE! Exquisite mountings. See before you buy. Write for FREE catalog.

National Zircon Co., Dept. 6 Wheeling, W. Va.

Catalog FREE!

OUTDOOR JOBS

Study for park ranger, game refuge and railway mail exams. Details free. Write Delmar Institute, M4, Denver, Colo.

and she understands what he does not put into words.

He was saving money for what he called his "dream ranch" when she first met him in Pendleton, where she won champion's money in the women's saddle riding contest. It was then it became *their* dream ranch.

But Thad wants to do everything himself. He wants to earn all the money to buy and stock the ranch.

"We don't need to wait so long," Vina tells him more than once. "I've been a pretty fair winner myself. I've saved a lot of my money."

"We'll talk about that later on," he always replies. But—"later on" Vina learns that there's another girl in the picture—a girl who claims that Thad belongs to her!

Against the swiftly moving background of the rodeo, Vina fights to win the man she loves from her rival, and how she does so makes a drama-packed yarn!

Among the other stories and interesting features in the next issue will be MANY HAPPY TRAILS, a fascinating true fact article in which Roy Rogers, cowboy movie, radio and rodeo star, tells the story of his life. This feature, plus many other stories and departments, will provide a heap of entertaining reading for everyone!

OUR MAILBAG

IT IS always a pleasure to look over the mail we are constantly receiving from the readers of RODEO ROMANCES. We are eager to hear from everyone. So how about you writing? Drop us a letter or a postcard telling us which stories you enjoyed the most in the magazine and about those which did not strike your fancy.

Here are some excerpts from just a few of the many letters we have been receiving:

Have been reading RODEO ROMANCES and THRILLING RANCH STORIES for over a year. Read lots of other Westerns, but these two are my

NEXT ISSUE'S NOVEL

HEARTS CONTENDING

By CLINTON DANGERFIELD

PACKED WITH RODEO THRILLS!

favorites now. The stories are real fine, especially the ones dealing with life stories of girls who made good in the Rodeo Arena. I think the rodeo game is the greatest of all sports, truly Western. Many thanks to our old friend Foghorn Clancy, for keeping us posted on the events in IN THE ARENA. Talk about value for your money!—*Jim Robinson, Kimberley, British Columbia, Canada.*

Thanks for your letter, Jim. You sound like a real rodeo fan, and aren't we all?

I have been reading RODEO ROMANCES for three or four years, and I'll never quit until I'm so old I can't see. I sure enjoy every issue. The story WILDCAT IN THE SADDLE was about the best story I've read, although I've never found any I didn't like. NONE BUT THE ARDENT HEART was also very good. I hope you can keep on giving us good stories to read in our spare time or anytime.—*Edna Mae Stanhope, Dallas, Oregon.*

We'll try our best to keep right on giving all of our readers just the type of yarns we think they will like—and thanks for your letter, Edna Mae.

I have been reading RODEO ROMANCES for a long time and I think it is wonderful. I have never seen a Rodeo, but I hope to sometime, and from the stories I have an idea what it's like. I haven't any favorite stories, I guess, for I like them all, and also the true stories of famous girls. Hope you keep up the good work—*Pauline Meeks, Cloyne, Ontario, Canada.*

Sure glad that you like the magazine so much, Pauline—and thanks for writing.

Three cheers for RODEO ROMANCES! It's the one magazine especially for us rodeo fans which we all enjoy.—*Roy Cranton, New York City.*

Them are kind words, Roy!

Getting dark now, folks. Looks like it is time to close up the gates of the arena, but here's hoping that you all will be back for the next performance. Let's hear from all of you readers who haven't written us yet—and if you have already written, how about doing it again? Please address all letters and postcards to The Editor, RODEO ROMANCES, 10 East 40th Street, New York, 16, N. Y. Thank you!

ENTERTAINING PUZZLES OF EVERY VARIETY IN

Popular Crossword Puzzles

Now on Sale—15c at All Stands!

STUDY AT HOME

WITH AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

Courses in ENGINEERING: Electrical; Civil; Mechanical; Drafting; Architectural; Automotive; Steam; Diesel; Aeronautical; Radio; Structural; Mining; Industrial; Petroleum; Marine; Refrigeration; Air Conditioning; Chemical.

Courses in ARTS AND SCIENCES: Philosophy; Education; Letters; Psychology; Public Health; Medical Jurisprudence; Sociology; Physics; Chemistry; Geology; Pol. Science; Theology; Law; Business and Commerce; Accounting; Mathematics; Statistics; Agriculture.

McKinley-Roosevelt Inc., 4610-Y12, Sheridan Rd., Chicago 40, Illinois

AUDELS Carpenters and Builders Guides

4 vols. $6

Inside Trade Information for Carpenters, Builders, Joiners, Building Mechanics and all Woodworkers. These Guides give you the short-cut instructions that you want—including new methods, ideas, solutions, plans, systems and money saving suggestions. An easy progressive course for the apprentice and student. A practical daily helper and Quick Reference for the master worker. Carpenters everywhere are using these Guides as a Helping Hand to Easier Work, Better Work and Better Pay. To get this assistance for yourself, simply fill in and mail the FREE COUPON below.

Inside Trade Information On:

How to use the steel square—How to file and set saws—How to build furniture—How to use a mitre box—How to use the chalk line—How to use rules and scales—How to make joints—Carpenters arithmetic—Solving mensuration problems—Estimating strength of timbers—How to set girders and sills—How to frame houses and roofs—How to estimate costs—How to build houses, barns, garages, bungalows, etc.—How to read and draw plans—Drawing up specifications—How to excavate—How to use settings 12, 13 and 17 on the steel square—How to build hoists and scaffolds—skylights—How to build stairs—How to put on interior trim—How to hang doors—How to lath—lay floors—How to paint

THEO. AUDEL & CO., 49 W. 23rd St., New York City

Mail Audels Carpenters and Builders Guides, 4 vols., on 7 days' free trial. If O.K. I will remit $1 in 7 days, and $1 monthly until $6 is paid. Otherwise I will return them. No obligation unless I am satisfied.

Name.....

Address.....

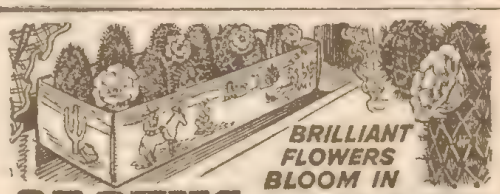
Occupation.....

Reference..... PAL

LAW STUDY AT HOME for PERSONAL SUCCESS and LARGER EARNINGS. 37 years expert instruction—over 108,000 students enrolled. LL.B. Degree awarded. All texts furnished. Easy payments. Send for FREE BOOK.
AMERICAN EXTENSION SCHOOL OF LAW
Dept. 71-T, 646 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 11, Ill.

ITCH'N Checked in a JIFFY

Relieve itching caused by eczema, athlete's foot, scabies, pimples and other itching conditions. Use cooling, medicated **D.D.D. Prescription.** Greaseless, stainless. Soothes, comforts and checks itching fast. 35c trial bottle proves it—or money back. Don't suffer. Ask your druggist today for **D.D.D. Prescription.**



BRILLIANT FLOWERS BLOOM IN

CACTUS GARDEN

COMES IN BEAUTIFUL 4-COLOR WATERPROOF PERMANENT BOX

10 PLANTS $1.69

Imagine, complete with striking window garden box, 10 healthy Cactus plants—all different varieties, all bloom—can now be sold direct to you at this amazing low price because of shipping difficulties to stores! Order now . . . save on this opportunity!

FREE Lovely hand-painted Mexican pot for window sill with columnar grower Lace Cactus blooms in purple, pink, red and yellow flowers. Gift to prompt orders! Hurry—send today. SEND NO MONEY—ORDER NOW—PAY LATER. Or mail $1.69 with order, we pay postage. Satisfaction guaranteed or money back. Send name and address to **PAN AMERICAN CACTUS CO., Dept. S-1914, 148 Monroe Ave., N. W., Grand Rapids 2, Michigan**

LEARN HOW TO WRITE GAGS!

Be the Life of the Party!
MAKE MONEY! WIN SUCCESS and FAME!

BE A POPULAR GAG WRITER—now it's easy! No experience or special talent is needed. Al Garry, the famed writer for radio stars—Frank Sinatra, Abbott and Costello, Phil Baker and others—will show you how!

Ten Easy Lessons Teach You

Garry's 10-lesson course on RADIO GAG WRITING tells all: how to originate and develop gags; characterizing gags; gag switching; timely gags; developing gags from everyday incidents; script writing from gags, and many secrets you need to know for gag-writing success! EXTRA: you get 500 side-splitting, original gags—start your own gag file and rework these immediately for money! Don't delay fame, fortune, fun—START NOW! Complete, easy-to-learn RADIO GAG WRITING COURSE only $3.95. **Send for it today!**

SATISFACTION, OR YOUR MONEY BACK

Look this Course over for 7 days. If you're not 100% satisfied—if you don't put your friends in stitches with your new sparkling wit, return the Course and I'll refund your money. Send $3.95 money order or check NOW—I'LL RUSH THE COURSE TO YOU POSTPAID AND GUARANTEED.

AL GARRY, Gagmaster, Dept. 6
IN THE HEART OF RADIOLAND
48 WEST 48TH STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

BE A BAKER *Learn at Home*

National Baking School announces their home study course in commercial baking. Baking is now one of America's high industries in wages. Not a seasonable business, but year-'round good field for trained and experienced men. If you have the desire and aptitude, send for FREE Booklet, "Opportunities in Commercial Baking."

NATIONAL BAKING SCHOOL
1315 S. Michigan Ave. : Dept. 1809 : Chicago 5, Ill.

AIR RIFLES BENJAMIN AIR PISTOLS
ARE IN PRODUCTION

ORDER BENJAMIN AIR RIFLES & BENJAMIN AIR PISTOLS from your DEALER. Send for our FREE FOLDER and Complete Specifications TODAY. Both Calibre Benjamin H-C Pellets are available now.
BENJAMIN AIR RIFLE CO., 876 MARION ST., ST. LOUIS 4, MO.

STAMMER?

This new 128-page book, "Stammering, Its Cause and Correction," describes the Bogue Unit Method for scientific correction of stammering and stuttering — successful for 45 years. *Free—no obligation.*

GET THIS FREE BOOK!

Benjamin N. Bogue, Dept. 4273, Circle Tower, Indianapolis 4, Ind.

AMAZING HAIR DISCOVERY
TO PREVENT BALDNESS AND HELP GROW HAIR

Men-Women now at home, can easily and inexpensively stop falling hair! Dandruff, itchy scalp vanishes like magic! Dull, drab hair becomes silky, lustrous-well groomed and help grow new hair on bald areas. For free information write today.

SILKLIKE SCIENTIFIC PROCESS CO.
1007 Bergenline Ave. Dept. K-1 Union City, N. J.

FREE 5" x 7" STUDIO ENLARGEMENT

With each order of 50 prints (from your negatives), up to Size 116, at 2c each. Larger prints 3c. Smaller lots—2½c, 3½c. All on special velox paper. Mirrotone finish. DECKLED EDGES. Satisfaction guaranteed. We develop and print up to 16 pictures on same roll—25c. WE PAY RETURN POSTAGE.
BRIDGEPORT FILM STUDIOS
Dept. TH-1, Box 2061, Bridgeport, Conn.

SHARE THE WEALTH

(Concluded from page 90)

"That's great, Mary!" he declared. "But it's not my money and I furnish the down payment on our ranch, or no dice."

"Listen, Pete! Can't you see? If there was ever a time for our agreement to be in force, now is that time."

But argue as she would, sometimes with tears in her eyes and sometimes with temper, Pete remained obdurate.

"No ranch until I can furnish the down payment," was his ultimatum.

"All right, Pete," Mary said in a small voice as she rose to leave." I'll have to get back to the stand now but I'll look in every day."

She kissed him and left, her mind busy with a plan which had come to her. On the way out she stopped at the hospital desk.

THE third day she and Pete walked down the long hall on his way to freedom again.

"What do you think this party will set me back?" he asked her, and looked at his own prize money check.

"Oh, I wouldn't know," Mary said airily. "Maybe a hundred and fifty. Hospitals are expensive these days. X-rays, leg dressings and such like cost money."

"Hunh," grunted Pete. "Kind of makes my prize-money look peanut-size."

They stopped at the cashier's desk.

"Got a bill for McGuinnes?" Pete asked.

At the reply he received, "No bill, Mr. McGuinnes."

Pete turned to look at Mary and missed the wink the cashier gave her.

"Rodeo accident cases don't pay," the cashier explained. "Good day, and good luck."

When it appeared as if Pete was set to argue, Mary plucked his sleeve.

"Come on, Pete, I've got to get to work," she said, and urged him toward the door. Outside, he told her gleefully:

"Sure looks like we'd have our ranch after all, girl!"

"Sure does, Pete," said Mary with a lilt in her tone and a sparkle in her eyes for this man of hers she knew was one to "ride the river with." He had not suspected her shenanigan. Only the cashier knew, and was sworn to secrecy. Pete would never know now that in her pocket at this minute Mary had Pete's receipted hospital bill.

BIG MONEY and YOUR OWN BUSINESS in LIQUID MARBLE!

FREE INFORMATION ON *THREE* BIG NEW MONEY-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES

Send for FREE Details

Regardless of your age, sex, previous experience, and whether you are an ex-serviceman or not, we will send you astonishing free facts about the unlimited possibilities—in your own business—with amazing LIQUID MARBLE and our other marvelous new products. To secure this information, absolutely free, fill in coupon below or send a letter or postcard. No salesman will call on you now or ever. Write TODAY! Offer limited.

1. **LIQUID MARBLE.** Make beautiful artificial Marble Slabs. Pour from liquid state. Glazed or unglazed. This marble may be mottled, veined, multi-colored or left in original snow-white state. The color is actually a part of the marble! Does not fade or wear away. LIQUID MARBLE is unsurpassed on kitchen or bathroom walls. Easy to make and install.
2. **PLASTIC FLOORING.** May be made in any color or combination of colors. Gives a lifetime of wear. Dustproof. Soundproof. Verminproof. Resilient to the tread. Lay out solid from wall to wall or in pattern design of various shaped blocks.
3. **FLEXIBLE MOLDS.** For plaster casting. Make your own molds for few cents each. $1.00 in raw materials will make up to $25.00 worth of finished goods. We furnish names of buyers.

Greatest Opportunities NOW!

With reconversion going ahead full speed, NOW is the time to line up your own money-making business. We offer you our **BIG THREE** money-making opportunities together with other equally profitable businesses. (See paragraph at right.) Get the FREE facts TODAY!

COMPO-TEX, Box 786-TG, St. Louis, Mo.

FREE! EXTRA! If you write us promptly we will include free information about our other big money-making businesses. These include Compo-Tile Roofing and Caen Stone, Plastic Wood, Artificial Marble and Granite, Stone and Metal Solder, Plastic Tile Cement, Papier Mache, and many others.

FREE INFORMATION COUPON!

COMPO-TEX, Box 786-TG, St. Louis, Mo.

Please send me free details of your BIG THREE Money-Making Propositions including LIQUID MARBLE. Also include information about the additional new business possibilities given directly above.

Name .....

Street .....

City ..... State.....

HIRE A HANDICAPPED WORKER — IT'S GOOD BUSINESS!

63½% Prefer Filter Pipes*

The replaceable filter in Frank MEDICO Pipes
Cuts down nicotine, whirlcools smoke.
Reduces tongue-bite, collects flakes and slugs, absorbs juices.
Cleaner, cooler smoke enters your mouth.
Replace filter when discolored.

Frank **MEDICO**

THE LARGEST-SELLING FILTER PIPE

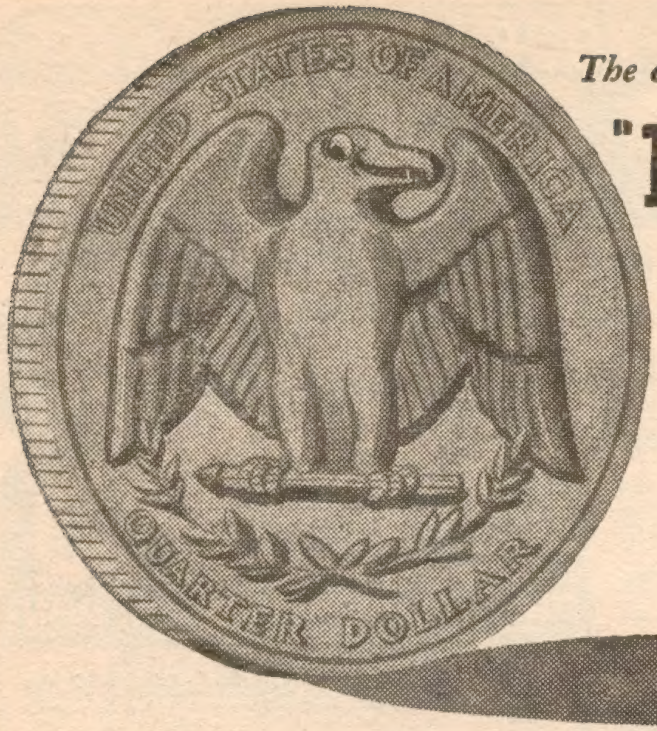
$1 with box of 10 filters

Frank **MEDICO FILTERED SMOKING**

American Legion Magazine Survey No. 2 "The Man Who Was GI Joe"

Only these genuine filters give you genuine Medico-Filtered Smoking. Packed only in this red-and-black box.

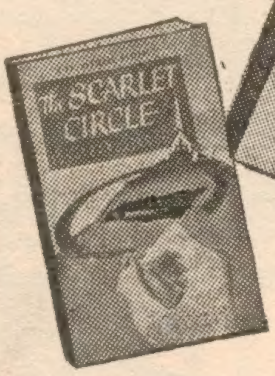
S. M. FRANK & CO., Inc., New York 22, N. Y.



The eagle on the quarter says,

"I'm one bird that doesn't have a squawk!"

No wonder the eagle is up in the clouds! The value of a quarter is sky high when it comes to buying good books. For only 25c you can obtain the best fiction, including top-flight mysteries and westerns, in POPULAR LIBRARY editions—*books of proven merit!*



POPULAR LIBRARY

BOOKS OF PROVEN MERIT

25¢ AT ALL STANDS

A Few Forthcoming Titles

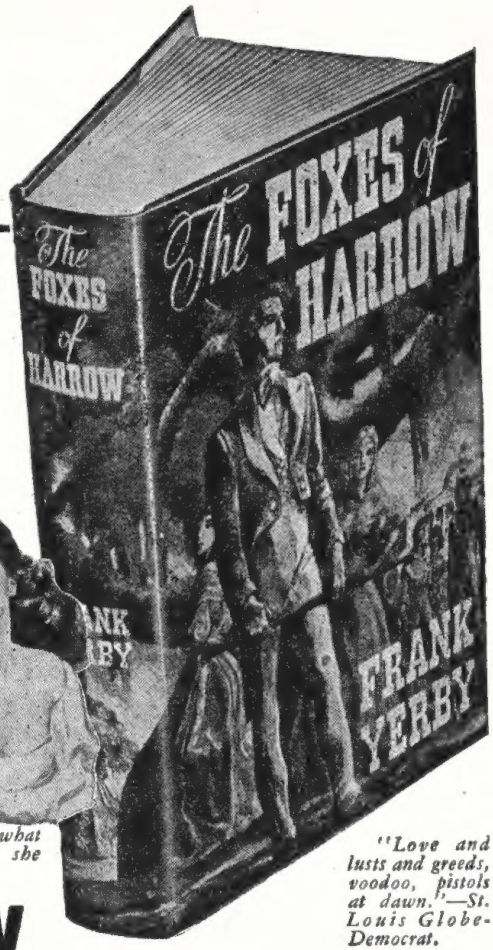
DUEL IN THE SUN.....by Niven Busch
LUMMOX.....by Fannie Hurst
THE RED LAW.....by Jackson Gregory
DIVIDEND ON DEATH.....by Brett Halliday
A VARIETY OF WEAPONS....by Rufus King
THE CASE IS CLOSED..by Patricia Wentworth

FREE...

To New Members of "America's Biggest Bargain Book Club"

THIS TREMENDOUS 534-PAGE BEST-SELLER!

A Roaring Tale of Flaming Passions in WICKED OLD NEW ORLEANS! 650,000 Already Sold!



HOT-BLOODED romance and explosive adventure on the old Mississippi! The amazing story of Stephen Fox, a reckless red-head who fought his way from the gutter to power and riches . . . and into the hearts of three tempestuously beautiful women!

This fabulous tale of wicked old New Orleans—of river-boat card sharps and duels at dawn — is among leading best-sellers. Selling everywhere at $3.00 a copy! But YOU can have a freshly-printed copy FREE—as a New Membership Gift from "America's Biggest Bargain Book Club"!

"This, M'sieur, is what I was made for!" she murmured.

"Love and lusts and greeds, voodoo, pistols at dawn."—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

The FOXES *of* HARROW

DEVIL-MAY-CARE STEPHEN FOX landed in New Orleans with a ten-dollar gold-piece, a pearl stick-pin — and a swaggering audacity. But he gambled his way to wealth — won the blue-blooded Odalie — then her sister, Aurore — and finally, the passionate Desiree. A best-seller at $3.00 in the publisher's edition. But now you can read it FREE!

You Also Get FREE Bonus Books

It costs you nothing to join "America's Biggest Bargain Book Club." And every month (or less often, if you wish) you may receive the current Selection — a best-seller by an author like Ben Ames Williams, John Steinbeck, Somerset Maugham, or Ernest Hemingway—a book selling for $2.50 and up in the publisher's edition. But you can get it for only $1.49!

In addition, for every two selections you accept you get, FREE, a BONUS BOOK—a masterpiece by Shakespeare, Dumas, Balzac, etc. These Bonus Books are *uniformly* bound; they grow into a handsome *lifetime* library.

You Do NOT Have to Take Every Monthly Selection

You do NOT have to accept each monthly Selection; only six *of your own choice* during the year to fulfill your membership requirement. And each month the Club's "Review" describes a number of *other* popular best-sellers; so that, if you prefer one of these to the *regular* Selection you may choose it instead. There are no membership dues; no further cost or obligation.

By mailing the coupon without money, you will receive at once your free copy of *The Foxes of Harrow*. You will ALSO receive, as your first selection, your choice of any one of these 3 best-sellers:

BEFORE THE SUN GOES DOWN—Amazing Best-Seller that won $145,000 in cash prizes!

THE STRANGE WOMAN—Ben Ames Williams' astounding story of a "Maine Cleopatra."

THE BLACK ROSE—Magnificent romantic thriller of love and adventure—2 MILLION COPIES SOLD!

Send coupon without money. Read *The Foxes of Harrow* for five days. If you are not then convinced that this IS "America's Biggest Bargain Book Club," return the book, pay nothing. But if you *do* feel that subscribing to the Book League is the wisest move you can make, keep this book as a gift; your subscription will begin with selection you choose in coupon. Mail coupon—without money—NOW! BOOK LEAGUE OF AMERICA, Dept. TG12, Garden City, N. Y.

Mail this Coupon to

BOOK LEAGUE OF AMERICA
Dept. TG12, Garden City, N. Y.

Please send me—FREE—The Foxes of Harrow. Within 5 days I may return it if I wish, without cost or obligation. Otherwise, I will keep it as a gift, and continue to receive forthcoming new monthly selections—at only $1.49, plus few cents postage. Also send me, as my first selection, the book I have checked below.

☐ Before the Sun Goes Down ☐ Strange Woman
☐ The Black Rose

For every two monthly selections I accept, I will receive, free, a BONUS BOOK. However, I do NOT have to accept each month's new selection, only six of my own choice during the year to fulfill my membership requirement. Each month I will receive the Club's "Review" describing a number of other popular best-sellers: so that if I prefer one of these to the regular Selection, I may choose it instead. There are no membership dues for me to pay; no further cost or obligation.

MR. }
MRS. } .....
MISS } (Please print plainly)

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....ZONE No. (if any).....STATE.....

Occupation.....If under 21 age please.....

Slightly higher in Canada. Address 105 Bond St., Toronto 2, Canada

$100 Monthly IF SICK or INJURED!

Plus HOSPITAL BILLS PAID!

AMAZING NEW **GOLD SEAL** POLICY

PROVIDES *All* THIS PROTECTION FOR JUST

$1 A MONTH

CASH BENEFITS *BIG* ENOUGH To Be WORTHWHILE!

SICKNESS BENEFITS! Policy pays for loss of time due to sickness, a regular monthly income for as long as 3 months, up to..... **$100.00 PER MO.**

ACCIDENT BENEFITS! Policy pays for *accident disability* at rate up to $100 per month, for as long as 24 months, or **$2400.00**

ACCUMULATED CASH! Policy pays for accidental loss of life, limb or sight up to $4,000, accumulated to..... **$6000.00**

PLUS SICKNESS, ACCIDENT and MATERNITY HOSPITALIZATION PLAN

Policy pays "hospitalization benefits" for *sickness, accident* or *maternity*, including hospital room at rate of $5.00 per day, operating room, anaesthesia, drugs, dressings, laboratory, X-ray, oxygen tent and other services, *even ambulance service.* Total hospital benefits as specified to over..... **$650.00**

The SERVICE LIFE INSURANCE CO.
773-F Service Life Building OMAHA 2, NEBRASKA

CASH for Almost Every Emergency!

Now, added millions can afford all-around insurance protection. Here is a combination SICKNESS, ACCIDENT & HOSPITALIZATION policy *for just a dollar a month* that pays in strict accordance with its provisions for ANY and ALL accidents, ALL the common sicknesses, even non-confining illness and minor injuries. It pays disability benefits from the very first day. NO *waiting period!* NO this is not the usual "limited" policy. It's an extra-liberal policy that provides quick cash to *replace lost income*, pay *doctor* and *hospital bills*, for *medicines* and other pressing demands for cash that invariably come when sickness or accident strikes.

POLICY ISSUED *By Mail* AT BIG SAVINGS!

NO MEDICAL EXAMINATION!

Ages 15 to 69. Actual policy sent by mail for 10 Days Free Examination. NO cost! NO obligation! NO salesman will call! See this policy and judge for yourself. It's the protection you need and should have at a price you *can* afford. Just mail coupon below! But *do it today.* Tomorrow might be too late!

FREE 10-DAY INSPECTION COUPON

The SERVICE LIFE INSURANCE CO.
773-F Service Life Bldg., Omaha 2, Nebraska

SEND without cost or obligation your extra-liberal "Gold Seal" $1-A-MONTH Policy for 10 Days' Free Inspection.

NAME.....

ADDRESS ..... AGE .....

CITY..... STATE .....

BENEFICIARY .....